



CHRISTIAN'S PATTERN:

TREATISE

OF THE

IMITATION

OF

FESUS CHRIST.

In FOUR BOOKS.

Written Originally in LATIN

By THOMAS a KEMPIS.

Now render'd into ENGLISH.

PRAYERS and MEDITATIONS for SICK PERSONS.

BY

GEORGE STANHOPE, D. D. Dean of Canterbury, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

Compar'd with the ORIGINAL, and the Translations by the Rev. Mr. WESLEY, &c. and in several Places amended.

MANCHESTER:

Printed by R. WHITWORTH, near the Exchange.

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FREATISE



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TO THE

KING's

Most Excellent Majesty,

The following

TRANSLATION

Of an Excellent, Serious, and Useful

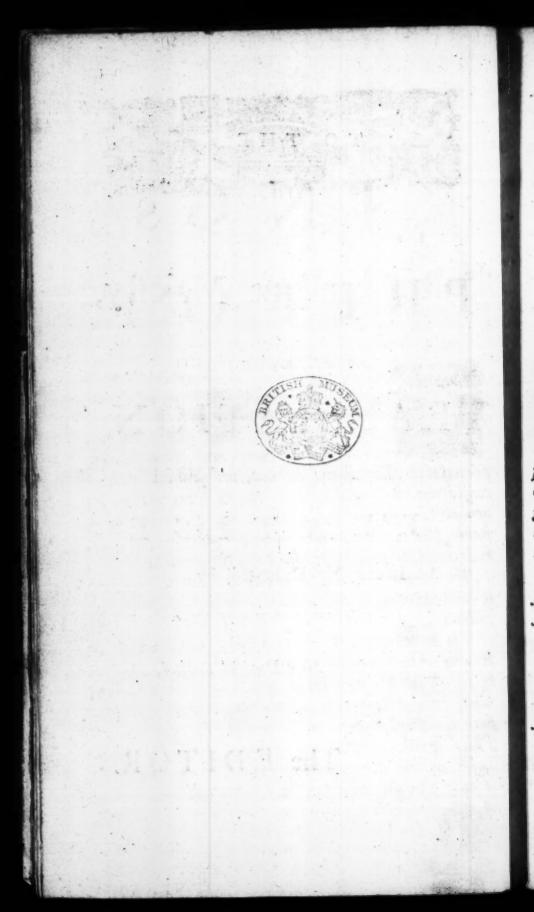
TREATISE

Is Humbly Dedicated, by

His MAJESTY's

Most Dutiful Subject,

The EDITOR.





THE

PREFACE.



HE Translation of this excellent Book by the learned and ingenious Dr. Stanhope, which has been so well received by the Publick, that above Twenty Thousand of them have been sold, is

principally followed in this Edition, tho' not without consulting those published by Mr. Wesley, and an ingenious anonymous Author; and as in this Edition more Assistance has been had than in any former one, it is hop'd it will justly claim the Preference.

The Preface to Dr. Stanhope's Translation being fo well adapted to this, take it almost verbatim as

follows.

The Reputation of this little Book, with which the Reader is here presented, seems abundantly established, by the great Pains taken to communicate it to Mankind, in most Languages of the Christian World. But since the English Version, bitherto in Use, was in some Places grown obsolete, and in many fell short of that Life and Spirit requisite for such Devotional Tracts, it was thought expedient to recommend it by a Style more

more modern, and a little better suited to Subjects of this Nature.

In this Attempt the Latin of Castalio is chiefly followed; he hath taken some Liberty in Places peculiarly relating to the Romish Superstitions: And the present Translator hath not only trodden in his Steps thus far; but, in the Chapters which concern a Monkish Life particularly, hath endeavoured so to express himself for the most part, as that such Meditations might be accommodated to the Circumstances of any pious Christian, who makes Religion his main Pleasure and Business, and is daily striving to habituate himself to the Exercise of Devotion and severer Virtues.

This was thought most agreeable to the great Defign be had in View, that of rendering these Reslections of general Use to the World: For which Reason also, he hath not been nicely close in many of the Flights usual with these mystical Divines; thinking it better either to give those rapturous Passions another Turn; or, by Additions and Illustrations of his own, to bring them down to the common Condition of buman Life, and sit them for the Mouths of every

fincere practical Christian.

In order to preserve the Zeal and Spirit of the Author, it was found necessary, sometimes to abridge, and at others to enlarge a Thought, and carry it a little higher: All which the Reader bath this Warning of, to prevent any Objections which might otherwise be raised, against the Faithfulness of an Undertaking, intended, not so much to acquaint Englishmen what Kempis thought, as to convey those Thoughts with some Degree of that Sprightliness and affectionate Warmth, which the original Composer at first felt. from them.

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And because the Reader will perhaps expect some Account of him, here follows in brief the Substance of what Rosweid hath delivered concerning him.

" This Thomas was call'd a Kempis from a lif-" tle Village of that Name, in the Diocese of Co-" logne, where he was born in the Year of our Lord " 1380. His Parentage and Fortune were mean; at " thirteen Years old he began his Studies, and about " nineteen betook bimself to a Monastery of Augustin " Monks: About five and twenty he took the Habit " of that House and Order. There he continued for "the Space of Seventy Years, particularly eminent " for his Piety, Humility, diligent Study of the Holy Scriptures, Austerity of Life, moving Elo-" quence in Discourse, and extraordinary Zeal in "Prayer. For his Person, he was of a middle Sta-"ture, of a strong brown Complection, a lively " piercing Eye, and a Sight so good, that though " he laboured much under other Infirmities of old " Age, yet be was never reduced to the Use of Spec-" tacles. He died July 25, 1471, in the ninety

" second Year of bis Age."

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Thus far the learned Doctor abovemention'd. It may be added, that the good and devout Author of this Book was very affable, courteous, and condescending to the very weakest and lowest of Christians; a Comforter to the Troubled, a compassionate Heiser to those under Temptations, exceedingly zeasous for the Salvation of Souls, which he as earnestly desir'd as his own; and it was his main Endeavour to draw also others with himself by his Writings, by his verbal Admonitions, by his private Instructions, and by all other Ways and Means he had in his Power to Holiness and Happiness. He lived agreeable to what he taught

taught and wrote, and verified that his Doctrine was

not impracticable.

The following Directions, chiefly taken from Mr. Wesley, may be serviceable to the profitable Reading

of this, or any religious Book.

I. Set apart some Time every Day for reading this, or some other pious Treatise. If any unavoidable Business deprives you of your Hour of Retirement, take the next vacant one for it. When fuch large Portions of each Day are so willingly allow'd for bodily Refreshments, and Diversions, I wish I could say always innocent ones, how can you scruple to allot some little Time for the Care of your infi-nitely more valuable Part, your immortal Spirit?

II. Be fure to read with great Attention and Seriousness, not hastily and carelessly; stop every now and then, to recollect what you have read, and confider bow to reduce it to Practice. If your Understanding is not encreased, it will be lost Time to read, and if your Will and Affections are not influenced, you will certainly be in a worse Condition, tho' the other is a very bad one, when you come to give up your Accounts at the Bar of the All-seeing Judge.

III. It may be of very great Use to read over and over such Passages as most nearly affect you. Forget not to conclude always with a short Ejaculation to God, which the Publisher begs Leave to join with you in, that his holy Spirit would assist your sincere Endeavours to encrease in Humility, Benevolence, Patience, Resignation to the Will of God, and every

other Virtue. 3 NO 65 8 NO65

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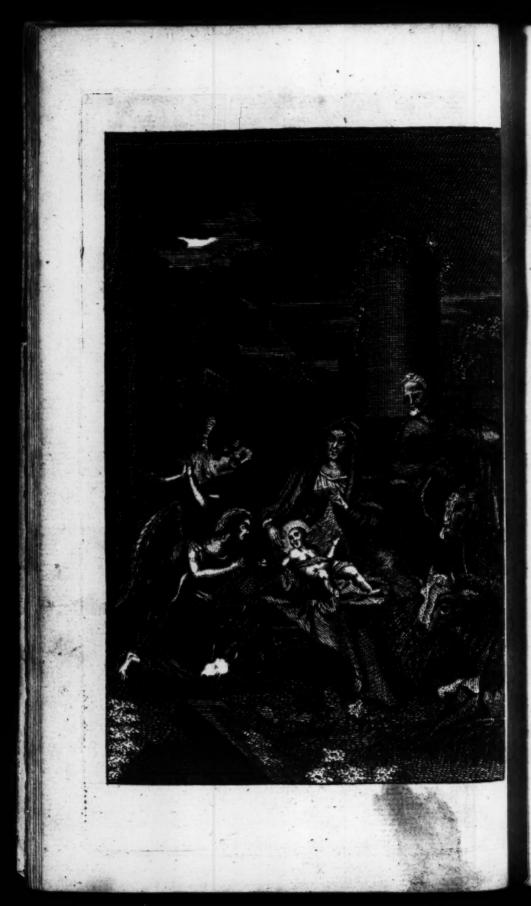
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OF THE

IMITATION

OF

FESUS CHRIST.

The FIRST BOOK.

CHAP. I.

Of the Contempt of the Vanities of the World.



E that followeth me, shall followin. 12.

not walk in darkness, but

shall have the light of life, says that
Christ, who declares himself the light
of the world. The true importance

and defign of which words is, doubtless, to instruct us, that the way to be truly enlightened, and to deliver ourselves from a blindness of heart, is to make his holy life the object of our imitation, and to form our dispositions and actions upon the perfect model of that bright example. But how shall we follow a pattern, which we but little think of? The first step

therefore toward thus copying after him, is the employing our thoughts, with great frequency and ferious attention, upon the perfections of this divine

original.

2. The doctrine taught by Christ, excels all the instructions deliver'd to mankind, by all the holy men that ever lived. And every man, endued with a true christian spirit, will not fail there to find a hidden manna, like that of old, sitted both to nourish, and minister delight to his soul. The true reason then why men hear the gospel, without any sensible relish, or eager desire, is, that they are not endued with the spirit of Christ. This is a treasure found of them only who heartily desire to find it; and a man must resolve and endeavour to form his whole conversation upon the principles of that doctrine, before he can attain to a full understanding of its excellence, and feel an inward satisfaction in the study of it.

3. And here indeed lies the true benefit of meditation and knowledge: for, without this, how poor and unprofitable a thing is speculation? What is a man the better, for entering into the sublime mysteries of the Trinity, and being able to dispute nicely upon that adorable union, if in the mean while he want that meekness and humility, without which he must needs lie under the displeasure of the Trinity? Distinctions and notions, the never so subtle or ferviceable to the truth, do not make a man just and holy; but a circumspect and conscientious life recommends us to the favour and love of God. I had rather be affected with a true penitent forrow for sin, than be able to resolve the most difficult cases about it. Suppose you had every word of the Bible

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treasured up in your memory, and a perfect comprehension of all the moral philosophy in the world; to what purpose serves this mighty stock of rules, if not drawn out into Use by benevolence to mankind, and humility and real goodness? Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity, said the Preacher; and his observation admits of that single exception, taken notice of in the conclusion of his book, love God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. He who would approve himself wise in good earnest, must single first by a just contempt of this world, raise himself up to the desires and endeavours after the kingdom of heaven.

4. Vanity indeed it is, with great folicitude to feek, and place our hope and confidence in riches, which are fure to perish. Vanity, to cherish our ambition, and strive, by all possible means, to attain a high and hold nourable station. Vanity, to indulge the desires of the flesh, and court those pleasures, which draw after them grievous and lasting pains. Vanity most exquisite, to be infinitely concerned for living long, and perfectly indifferent, or but coldly affected, concerning living well. Vanity most fatal and stupid, to determine our thoughts and cares to this present life, and never look forward to that which is to come: to doat upon things that fly fwiftly from us, and cling fast about imaginary and transitory delight; while we suffer our selves by these to be detained and diverted from the pursuit of fubstantial and eternal joys.

5. Oh, turn this vehemence of desire upon the right object, and remember, to how little purpose it is placed on that which cannot give content; since most true is that observation, which ought to make

us wifer, The Eye is not satisfied with See-Ecclef. i. 8. ing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing. Use then thy utmost diligence, to wean thy foul from the Love of Things that are feen, and fet thy affections on Things that are not feen. For, be affured, that they, who follow their own fenfual appetites, do lose, not only their labour and expectation, but also their innocence and purity, the peace of their own conscience, and the favour of Almighty God.

CHAP II. MODESTY.

HE defire of knowledge is natural to every man, but what advantage is it to be knowing, if that knowledge be not feafoned with virtue and religion? The vilest peasant, and he, whom we in fcorn think least removed from a brute, if he ferve God according to the best of his mean capacity, is yet a better and more valuable man, than the proudest philosopher, who busies himself in considering the motions of the heavens, but bestows no reflection at all upon those of his own mind. The certain consequence of knowing a man's felf truly, is a mean opinion of himself, and not being exalted with the commendations of other people. And supposing my knowledge fo vast and extensive, that nothing this world contains were hid from it; yet what would all this avail me in the fight of God, who, when he comes to judgment will try me upon the iffue, not of what I have known, but what I have done?

2. Restrain that extreme desire of increasing learning, which at the same time does but increase forrow, by involving the mind in much perplexity and

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false delusion. For such are fond of being thought men of wisdom, and respected as such: and yet this boafted learning of theirs confifts in many things, which a man's mind is very little, if at all, the better for the knowledge of. And fure, whatever they may think of the matter, he who bestows his time and pains upon things that are of no fervice for promoting the happiness of his soul, ought by no means to be esteemed a wife man. Words and notions in themselves give no real satisfaction; but a virtuous life never fails to comfort and refresh the mind, and to minister the best antidote against all manner of difficulties; for fuch is a good confcience, and a well grounded confidence to-

wards God, which is its inseparable attendant:

3. The more a man knows, and the better those fubjects are, upon which his studies have been employed; the heavier shall his account be, unless his piety and virtue be proportionably eminent and exemplary. How little reason then have we to be exalted with our attainments, when we know our account will be larger, as we improve more in knowledge. And what improvements indeed can possibly be so great, as to justify our being proud of them? For no man can ever want this mortification of his vanity that what he knows is but a very little, in comparison of what he still continues ignorant of. Consider this, and, instead of boasting of thy knowledge of a few things, confess and be out of countenance for the many more which thou art ignorant of. And why fo forward to prefer thyfelf before others, when there are so many persons whose learning, and skill in the rules of living, give them an undoubted right to be preferr'd before you? If you would attain to useful

useful learning indeed, learn to conceal your attainments, and be content that the world should think meanly of you: for lowliness of mind, and not thinking of a man's felf more highly than be ought to think, is the most difficult, but withal the most profitable lesson; and the preferring others before ourselves, is a point of true wisdom and high perfection. Nor ought our opinions of this kind to be changed, though we should see another guilty of some egregious folly, or very grievous wickedness, fince we ourselves are men of like passions and frailties; nor can we tell how long our own virtue may continue unshaken. Remember then, that infirmities are common to all mankind; and fo remember it, as to perfuade yourfelf, or at least to suspect, that these are dealt to thee in as plentiful a measure, as to any other person whatsoever.

CHAP. III. The Doctrine of Truth.

B Lessed is the man, whom truth condescends to teach; not by dark figures, and words quickly forgotten, but by a full and familiar communication of itself. Happy should we be, could we but see things as they are, free from the errors of our fond opinions, and the false estimates we form from thence. How high a value do we set upon the knack of distinguishing and disputing nicely, in matters hid from common apprehensions; but matters too, which to know nothing of will not render a man's case one whit the worse at the day of judgment? Egregious and elaborate folly! over-look useful and necessary points, as things not worthy our regard; and bend our industry

ftry to find out those, which either turn to no account, or what is worse than none. Thus we take pains to be ignorant at last, and Psal. cxv. verify in our own selves, the prophet's description of the heathen idols, which have eyes, and yet see not.

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Why should we then, with such eager toil, strive to be masters of logical definitions? Or what do our abstracted speculations profit us? He, whom the divine word instructs, takes a much shorter cut to truth; for from this word alone all faving knowledge is derived, and without this no man underflands or judges aright. But he, who reduces all his studies to, and governs himself by this rule, may establish his mind in perfect peace, and rest himself fecurely upon God. O thou, whose very effence is truth, unite me to thy felf in perfect love! The variety of other subjects tires and distracts my foul; in thee alone I find the fum of all my wishes and defires. Should all our teachers be for ever dumb, and this great volume of the creatures continue shut to us, we might dispense with all the rest, if thou would'st vouchsafe thy own information, and teach us by thy felf.

The better acquainted any man is with himself, the more he converses with, and retires into his own breast; and the less he wanders abroad, and dwells upon things without him, the more extensive and sublime is his knowledge, and the more easily attained. Because this man receives, and is directed by a ray darted from heaven into his soul. A mind sincere and pure, and firm, is not diverted by multiplicity of objects. For the honour of God is its constant aim; and, having but one end to pursue, it is in persect peace and unity with it self, and does not divide its

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thoughts with vanity and felf-love. For what can be a greater hindrance than our own ambitious and ungovern'd passion? A truly good and pious man first orders and disposes all his business regularly, before he enters upon the execution of any design: he suffers no vicious inclination to divert him, but makes every undertaking submit to the dictates of reason and religion. The sharpest as well as the noblest conflict is that, wherein we labour to gain a conquest over ourselves; and this should be our principal and constant care, to get ground every day, by bringing our passions more and more under, and becoming more masterly proficients in virtue and goodness.

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Nor may we suppose any degree of virtue so exalted, that it should cease to be a state of proficiency; for fuch is the condition of mortals, that their utmost poffible perfection in this life, is ever embased with an allay of imperfection; and their brightest notions are clouded with some confusion and obscurity. in the study of ourselves we are best capable of avoiding mistakes. Therefore a true sense of what we are, and that humility, which cannot but proceed from fuch a fense, is a furer way of bringing us to God, than the most laborious and profound enquiries after knowledge: not that learning is in its own nature blameable; for the understanding of any thing whatfoever, confidered fimply, and as it really is, ought to be acknowledged commendable and good; the gift and ordinance of God. But the danger is, when we give this the precedence in our esteem, before things abundantly better; I mean a good conscience, and a virtuous conversation. true reason then why, in an age where learning is had in universal admiration, so little profit is made;

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and both error and vice do, notwithstanding, so wretchedly abound; is, in truth, no other, than that men generally mistake their main business and proper excellence. They had rather cultivate their parts than their manners, and account it a greater accomplishment, to know much, than to live well.

Oh! would men but bestow half the pains in rooting out vice and planting virtue in its flead, which they are content to throw away upon captious and unprofitable questions, and the opposition of science, falsly so called; what a blessed reformation should we see? Then would not the vulgar, and meaner fort, abandon themselves to such scandalous, brutish, and abominable wickedness. Nor would the men of fense and learning, and quality, continue fo profligate and diffolute in their manners, and blemish, as they do, their honour and attainments, with shameless and licentious impurities. Surely this could not be, did men but confider at all, that a day of judgment will come, wherein measures will be taken very different from ours; when the enquiry, upon which our affairs must all turn, will be, not how much we have heard or read, but how much we have done; not how eloquent our expressions, but how pure and devout our lives; how much our manners, not our capacity or breeding, our wit or rhetorick, distinguished us from common men. But, if the credit and honour of the thing were the only confideration; yet even thus, where is the fruit of all this mighty toil? What is become of all the eminent divines, philosophers, lawyers, orators, perions celebrated far and near just at the time when they lived and flourished? But now some body else enjoys the gains of all that learning and fatigue; and 'tis odds, whether he that lives upon their labours, ever so much as sends one thought after them. These men, so eminent in their respective professions, no doubt, thought themselves considerable in their own time; but now that time is gone, and they are lost in universal silence. Their very names are buried as deep as their bodies; and the one was scarce sooner out of sight, than the other out of all mention and remembrance.

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Ah wretched men! How have you been deluded? How short and withering a good does that fame and reputation prove, which you vainly promifed your felves would be eternal; always fresh and flourishing, always precious in the mouths and memories of posterity? But this, and no better, is the condition of all worldly honour. Oh! had you but been equally careful to improve in piety, and rendered your virtues as eminent as your learning, your studies then had not been fruitless? but followed with a recompence, which would not thus have forfaken you. But this is the fatal error of our age, that infinite numbers are destroyed by unprofitable knowledge. They lay themselves out upon subtilties and curiosities, which turn to no account; and the only thing which can make them truly happy, religion and the fervice of God, that they give themselves no manner of trouble about, but flight, as not worth their care or thought. The great occasion of the fantastical opinions and dangerous corruptions, with which the world is pester'd, is certainly this, that men propose no end of their studies but to be great, and to have other people think as highly of them, as they do of themselves. And because of all things, they detest humility, and a regard to truth; God gives them the due reward of their

their vanity, and suffers them to be seduced by their own absurdities and imaginations. If then we would be great, let us take the proper course for it: for none is really so, but he that abounds in the love of God, and in good works; none is truly so, but he, who thinks modestly of himself, and is got above the temptations of ambition and vain-glory. The man, who is wise to purpose, counts all this world can boast of, but dross and dung, that he may win Christ.

Phil iii. 8.

And he is an expert and learned man indeed, who hath learnt to give the preference to God's will, before his own; who resolutely complies with his commands, and as resolutely denies his own evil

inclinations.

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CHAP. IV.

Prudence in our behaviour.

B E not too hasty in believing every word, nor the suggestions of every spirit; but consider coolly and leisurely, and make a conscience of Prov. xiv. 15. giving your credit with due caution. I John iv. 1. Men are much more prone (the greater is the pity) both to speak and believe ill, than well, of their neighbours. This is our infirmity and unhappiness; but a good man will consider and make allowances for it. And the effect of this consideration will be, the suspending his assent, each wix. 5. and neither believing all he hears, nor officiously reporting all he believes.

It is an argument of great wisdom, to do nothing rashly; nor to be obstinate and inflexible in our opinions. And the cautiousness I just now recommended,

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in crediting and spreading reports, is a necessary branch of the same perfection. Advise in your affairs with wise and good men; and think it more for your reputation, to be instructed by those who understand better, than to act upon your own head. A virtuous life makes a man prudent in God's esteem, and gives true Eccl. xix. 24. conduct and experience. The more humble and observant we are to his directions, the better we shall behave ourselves, and the greater satisfaction and peace of mind we shall find resulting from all we do.

CHAP. V.

Of reading the holy fcriptures.

HE end we should propose to ourselves in this fludy, is the discerning and discovery of truth, not the observing quaintness and propriety of expression. That book of God indeed should be perused with the same spirit and temper by which it was dictated. And as the Holy Ghost intended the profit of mankind more than niceness of words Rom. xv. 4. and phrases, so should we aim at grow-1 Cor. ii. 1, 4. ing better livers, rather than wifer, or more accurate speakers, by what he hath delivered. To persons thus disposed, the plainest and most pious parts of scripture will minister a delight equal to those which are misterious and sublime. The authority and skill of the penman should be of little weight with us. Nor matters it, whether he were one of great or mean attainments; for the love and defire of truth is the proper motive to study; and the substance of what is spoken, not the person who fpeaks, ought principally to be confider-Pet.xxiv.25 ed. All flesh is grass, but the word of the

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d d the Lord abideth for ever; and this word speaks to us in different manners, without any partial respect of persons.

One great inconvenience in reading the scriptures, is our own vain curiofity. We lose much of the benefit which might otherwise be gathered from them, by pretending to nice disquisitions of difficult points, and labouring to bring to the standard of our own imperfect reason, what we should be content to receive with the fimplicity of an humble obedience, and place to the account of divine faith. If you would read them, and profit by that reading, you must do it with a fubmiffive and humble, a fincere and teachable disposition of mind; and account it a greater excellence to believe what God hath faid, than to affect the reputation of learning, by fingularity of opinions, and a bold attempt to bring down all he fays to your own comprehension. If in some things you find occasion to doubt or distrust your own judgment, confult wife and holy perfons, and fubmit patiently to hear and be inform'd by them. Nor let a vain conceit of your own abilities Ecclu. viii. 8,9. produce contempt of the aphorisms and parables of the ancients. For, be well affured, they were not uttered at all adventures; but they, who delivered these proverbial sentences, knew them to be the refult of long and judicious observation.

CHAP. VI.

Of inordinate affections.

HE moment a man cherishes any immoderate desire, he feels a tempest rising in his soul. Pride and covetousness never suffer us to rest; but the poor and lowly in heart, the humble and the contented,

calm. He that is still in conslict with his passions, and hath not yet attained a compleat victory over them, is easily tempted, and often finds himself overborn by things not worth his concern. For the remains of a carnal spirit, and the strong tendencies to pleasures of sense, will not suffer a man, without great difficulty, to draw his mind off from worldly affections. And therefore while he is endeavouring to do this, it is with fore travel and pain; he commits a violence upon himself, and is provoked to anger and indignation against all that opposes him in so laborious an undertaking.

But if he indulge those desires, and succeed in them, the consequence is worse this way, than the other. For then he is stung with remorse for his guilty compliance, and discontented to find, that the gratifying his inclination does not yield the satisfaction he promised himself from it. This convinces him by sad experience, that true peace and content is never to be had by indulging his appetites, but by an obstinate resistance of them. And such peace cannot be expected in the breast of any sensual man; for it is the peculiar portion and happiness of a soul raised above the world, a zealous and devout, a mortisted and refined,

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and heavenly disposition of spirit.

CHAP. VII.

Directions for avoiding pride, and vain confidences.

To put our trust in man, or in any other Creature, is most egregious vanity. Think it not below you, to submit to the meanest good offices for the service of your brethren, and

and the fake of Jesus Christ; nor count it any shame to be thought poor and mean in this world. Do your own endeavour honestly, and faithfully; and never doubt of God's affistance. Depend not upon your own wisdom, and place not any confidence in the greatest man living; but let your whole trust rest entirely upon the favour of 1 Pet. iv. 5. Luke i. 52. X.V. 11.

God who bringeth down and refisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the hum-

ble and exalteth those who are content to abase them-

selves.

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Boast not of riches, because they are in your prefent possession; nor of friends, because they have power and interest; but if you will glory, glory in God, who is able to give all things, and willing to give that which is better than all, even himself. And why should the strength and beauty of your person puff you up with pride, when it is in the power of a very little fickness, to bring upon you extreme weakness, and odious deformity? If you be inclin'd to value your wit and address above due measure, remember from what hand these come, and do not provoke the giver, by abufing the gift.

Fancy not yourfelf better than your neighbours, lest God, who knows what is in every man, think the worse of you upon that account. Nay, value not yourfelf even for what you have done well, for God judgeth not as man judgeth; and what we often are highly fatisfied with, he fometimes thinks not fit so much as to approve. If you be conscious of any thing good in yourfelf, think that the fame or better qualities may likewise be found in others: for while you allow their excellencies, it will be much easier to preserve a modest opinion of your

own.

own. There can come no harm of supposing every other man better than yourself; but the supposing any man worse than yourself, may be attended with very ill consequences. The meek, says the scripture, Psal. xxxvii. is refreshed in the multitude of peace; but Isa. Ivii. the proud in spirit is like a troubled sea, perpetually tost and driven by the sierce commotions of anger, and emulation and envy, and disdain, which never suffer him to be easy and composed.

CHAP. VIII.

Against too general an acquaintance, and inconvenient freedoms in conversation.

OPEN not thine heart to every man, but make choice of prudent and religious persons to dif-Ecclu. viii. 19. close thy affairs to. Frequent not the company of young men and strangers; flatter not the rich, neither affect to be seen in the presence of great men: but affociate thy self with the devout, the virtuous the humble; and contrive that thy discourse be profitable. Desire not the intimate acquaintance of women; but, instead of thy conversation, let them have thy prayers; and recommend the preservation and the reward of their virtue to God. Converse as much as may be with God, with his holy angels, with thy own conscience; and complain not for want of company, nor think it an unhappiness to have but few acquaintance, when thou hast so good company as this always at hand.

Our charity indeed should be universal, and extend to all mankind; but it wou'd be very inconvenient, our friendships and familiarities should do so too. We often find, that a person altogether unknown to C

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fel be, us, comes recommened by a good character, which makes us paffionately fond of his acquaintance, and yet this very man, when better known, loses the great opinion we conceived of him before, and grows cloying and flat upon our hands. And this we may be fure is no less likely to prove our own case: for the persons, with whom we hope to ingratiate ourselves by a freer acquaintance, frequently discover something difagreeable in us, which makes us less acceptable. And therefore, in prudence and tenderness both to ourselves and others, we should be very sparing in our intimacies; because it so very often happens that the more perfectly men are known, the less right they have to esteem.

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CHAP. IX.

Obedience and a state of subjection.

T is a very valuable advantage to live under the direction of a superior; and, whatever the generality of men think of the matter, more difficult and hazardous to command than to obey. Many submit more out of necessity, than out of any principle of duty or choice; and, to such as these, this is a state of continual torment. All they do is against the grain, attended with constant murmurings and complaints; the life of flaves and brutes, and not of men, who should act with a spirit of freedom. And this natural liberty no inferior person attains to, till he has learnt to obey chearfully, for God's, and confcience fake. Whatever post you form an idea of, none will give you quiet and inward content, equal with that of a state of subjection: many have fed themselves with fond imaginations, how happy they should be, if they could change their condition for a higher;

but few, if any, who have actually made the experiment, have found themselves a jot the happier or easier for it.

'Tis true indeed, every man's own judgment is the proper rule and measure of his actions; and hence it comes to pass, that we are all best pleased with them who are of the same opinions with ourselves. But 'tis as true, that if God rule in our hearts, we shall not think much to recede from our own sense in fome cases, when peace and the publick good may be promoted by fuch concessions. For who is so absolutely and compleatly wife, that nothing escapes his knowledge? If then our knowledge be but partial and imperfect, 'tis but reasonable we should not be stiff in our opinions, but allow a fair hearing at least to those who differ from us. And in such cases a man gains a great point, when he knows himself in the right, and yet in tenderness and charity, can comply with the infirmities or mistakes of others, rather than offend God, by being too tenacious of his own better judgment.

I have frequently been told, that it is much fafer to take advice, that to give it: for a man may have confidered and determined well; and yet there may be some cases, which may make it reasonable to depart from that determination, and give ourselves up to be determined by other persons. And when these cases happen, to refuse such compliances, manifestly betrays our own self-conceit, and is not constancy,

but obstinacy of spirit.

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CHAP. X.

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D Ecline crowds and company as much as conveniently you may: for frequent discourse, even of news, or indifferent things, which happens upon fuch occasions, is sometimes an obstruction to virtue, when least intended or suspected so to be. The world and its vanities easily take hold of us, and our minds are enfnared and captivated, before we are aware. How often have I found reason to wish, that I had not been in company, or that I had faid nothing, when I was there? If we examine, how it comes to pass, that mutual conversation gives so great delight, notwithstanding we so seldom enjoy that pleasure with perfect innocence; the true account, I think is this, that we find ourselves diverted by discourse, and unbend our thoughts from severer studies: that what we defire, and are most fond of, or what we have the greatest aversion to, lies uppermost in our minds; and therefore we propose some ease in discharging ourselves upon these subjects.

But how very seldom do we find that ease we propose by doing so? For this outward consolation mightily takes off from that inward and spiritual satisfaction, in which true happiness consists. Therefore it is our duty to watch and pray, and to fill up the empty spaces of life, with these holy and devout meditations. And if at any time the refreshments of company be chosen, and convenient; a strict guard should be set upon our tongues, that they utter nothing amiss; but improve these very diversions to the edification of ourselves, and them that hear us. Im-

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pertinent and lavish talking is in itself a very vicious habit, and a wretched hindrance to our spiritual proficiency. And these two considerations ought to make us extremely cautious in our conversation. But it is the privilege of virtuous and religious discourse, that piety and goodness are wonderfully promoted by such conferences. And then especially, when persons of the heavenly spirit and temper frequent one another's company, with a design of improving by it.

CHAP. XI.

Of peace of mind, and a defire of improvement.

E N might live quiet and easy enough, if they would be careful not to give themselves trouble, and forbear meddling with what other people do and fay, in which they are no way concerned. But how should he be easy, who makes other men's cares his own? Who industriously seeks disquiet, and when he might rest in peace within doors, goes abroad to invite and fetch disturbance home to his house; who takes fuch pains, and fpends fo much time to enquire into the affairs of neighbours and strangers altogether foreign to him; and feldom or never descends into his own breast, that he may examine and know himself. Blessed are the meek, says the scripture, for Matt. v. 5. they shall inherit the earth peaceably, and I/a. xxix. 19. increase their joy in the Lord. Whence is it, think you, that some holy persons can so perfectly abstract themselves from the concerns of this world, and find fuch fatisfaction in their divine retirements, and folitary contemplations? From hence, no doubt, that they have made it their bufiness to mortify all earthly and fenfual affections, and fo have devoted them-

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themselves entirely to God, and are at liberty to attend upon him without distraction. But we find the case much otherwise with us; because our passions interrupt our piety, and the transitory things of this world continue tenderly to affect us. We seldom gain an entire conquest over any one ill habit; nor are we zealous to make every day we live a step to higher degrees of virtue. This is the reason why we are so cold and insensible, or at best but lukewarm and indifferent, in the exercises of piety and private meditation.

Were we but, as we ought to be, dead to the world and our own lusts, disentangled from those chains and fnares within, that hamper and keep our fouls close to matter and fense; then should we also relish acts of devotion, and be ravished with marvellous joy, when our thoughts are fixed on God and The only, or the greatest bar to these spiritual delights, proceeds from passions unsubdued; and from our own floth, which cares not to encounter difficulties, nor aspires to the perfection of the saints. Hence is that lowness and dejection of spirit, so vifible, fo fcandalous, when any little misfortune comes across us: hence our vain confidence, and anxious care, which feeks and depends upon human helps and remedies; and neglects God, our only fufficient refuge and deliverer.

Would we but quit ourselves like men, and resolutely stand our ground, we should not fail of succours from above. God is always ready to strengthen those who strive earnestly, and place their hope in the assistance of his heavenly grace: he means our very hardships and dangers for our good; and engages us in new conslicts and temptations, that he may make

our victories more glorious, and qualify us for a brighter crown. If we content ourselves with the observance of the outward duties only, and suppose this is the utmost perfection necessary for us; we bring religion into a very narrow compass, and may quickly get to the end of it. But, alas! the main of our business lies within: the axe must be laid to the root of the tree, and our sensual appetites quite subdu'd before we can attain to true pleasure in holiness,

and a peaceful ferenity of mind.

Would we but impose upon ourselves the task of mortifying a fresh lust, and conquering a vicious habit every year; even thus in a little time we might attain to some perfection. But, alas! we often take the direct contrary course; and are generally more cautious, more devout, more zealous to do well and to avoid evil, when we first enter upon a religious life, than after we have spent some time in it. The fervor of our affection, which ought in reason to grow every day stronger and brighter, cools and goes out again; and we reckon it a great matter, if our zeal can be kept up to the fame warmth, which we felt at its first kindling. We are too tender of our ease, and loth to put ourselves upon the stretch; whereas, would we but use a little severity, and submit to some violence at first, that trouble would quickly wear off; and all our progress in virtue would prove, not easy and tolerable only, but even a delight, and wonderful fatisfaction to us.

'Tis hard, I own, to part with our old acquaintance, and to leave off habits to which we have been long accustomed. And harder yet it is, to enter into a formal war with our own inclinations, and obstinately to deny what we eagerly desire. But if

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we do not conquer smaller difficulties, what will become of us, when affaulted by greater? If we do not refift our natural propensions at first, before inclination is strengthened by custom, the enemy will gather strength. Every day's practice is a fresh reinforcement; and the longer the delay, the greater will be the difficulty. O think of this in time, and confider the happy effects of an early and ferious piety: what peace, what triumphs to yourselves; what joy to others, to God and Christ, to angels and good men, you will certainly procure, by behaving yourselves gallantly in this spiritual warfare. This fure will balance all the hardships of virtue; reproach your cowardice and floth, provoke and inflame your diligence and courage; and make you zealous, refolute, impatient to grow in goodnefs, and advance every day in spiritual perfection.

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CHAP. XII.

The advantage of afflictions.

IT is good for me, that I have been in Trouble, fays David. Nor is it David's case alone; for many men have reason to bless that providence, which sends crosses and calamities upon them. These bring a man's thoughts home, put him upon reslection, and help him to understand himself and his condition. They shew him, that he is in a state of probation and pilgrimage, and forbid him to set up his hope and rest, in a strange country, where he is no better than a sojourner.

Nor is it thus with those sufferings alone, which the immediate hand of heaven inslicts; but even those whereof men are the instruments. The inju-

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ries and contumelious ufage, the calumnies and cenfures of them who fpeak and think ill of us, bring their profit with them too; even when most unjust, most undeserved. For these oftentimes are an occafion of rectifying our measures, as bringing us to a juster and more modest opinion of ourselves. They cure our ambition and vain-glory, and convince us how vain a thing it is, to thirst after reputation and the praise of men, when even innocence and goodness cannot protect us from slander and reproaches. They teach us to fet a due value upon the testimony of our own consciences, and the righteous approbation of God, the fearcher of hearts; when that, which he will not fail to commend and reward, does not often escape the contempt and condemnation of the world, nor prevail for fo much as fair quarter, from our mistaken and injurious brethren.

It is therefore both our duty and our wifdom, fo entirely to place our happiness and expectations in God alone, that we shall not need to be extremely follicitous for many outward comforts, or feel ourfelves destitute, or much dejected, when any of these happen to fail or forfake us. For when a well-difposed man is oppressed with sufferings and temptations, or perplexed with evil thoughts, he then feels experimentally, how necessary the divine affistance is, and how little he is able to do or endure without it: then he is touched with inward remorfe, then does he groan in fecret, and, in the anguish of his heart, pour out his requests for relief and deliverance: then even life itself becomes a burthen, and death defirable; as that which will translate him from this valley of tears and corruption, to a life of immortality with his God and redeemer. In a word, fuch cir-

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cumstances as these are more effectual than ten thoufand arguments, to convince him, by his own fenfible experience, that perfect fecurity, and entire fatisfaction, are not so much as consistent with the condition of man in this present world; and therefore we must be content to wait another and future state, which chiefly deserves our affections, because it alone can make us truly and compleatly happy.

CHAP. XIII.

Of resisting temptations.

O long as we continue in this world, we must onot flatter ourselves with being exempted from tribulations and trials. These are so inseparable from mortality, that Job calls the life of Job. vii. 1. man a warfare, or place of exercise. It See lxx. E. highly concerns every one of us upon vulg. this account, to take great care for managing himfelf under his temptations; to watch and pray diligently; as being duly sensible that he hath a watchful enemy to deal with, one who will not fail to take all advantages of deceiving, and who goes about continually, feeking whom he may devour. Nor must our attainments in virtue dispose us to remit of this care, for virtue is no abfolute fecurity. No man is fo perfect, fo holy, as never to be affaulted, or out of the reach of this adversary. We may defend ourselves against his attacks, but still attack'd we most certainly shall be.

Now tho' there is great hazard and uneafiness, yet is there likewise great profit to be made from temptations; particularly, as they contribute to the humbling our minds, to the purging off our dross, and the

way to happiness, which all the faints of God have travell'd before us, and by it at last were safe conducted to their journey's end: and they who fell of and were discouraged at the ruggedness of the passage, are all reprobates and cast-aways. No order or profession of men is so sacred, no place so remote or folitary, but that temptations and troubles will

find them out and intrude upon them.

Nor ought it to feem strange, that these should haunt and purfue us close, at all times and places; fince we ourselves carry about us the very matter of our temptations, and can never run away from those natural propensions, upon which they work, and from whence they take occasion to destroy us. This is the account we may reasonably give ourselves, why there should be such an uninterrupted succesfion of temptations and miseries, and why one trouble fhould press so hard upon the heels of another. For how indeed can it be otherwise; fince with our innocence we lost our fafety and happiness, and must be born to trouble, because the ground of our trouble is now become a part of our nature? Many men involve themselves deeper in temptations, by being too folicitous to decline them. For we must not suppose ourselves always to have conquered a temptation, when we have fled from it. The nobler, and fometimes the more effectual way, is to vanquish them by patient enduring, and being humbled under them.

Thus much is plain; that by declining a temptation we have not disarmed it. The root is standing still, and will soon be sprouting again; and a man who slees, is so far from getting ground upon his ad-

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versary, that he rather encourages him to pursue more vigorously. The way to overcome is by patience and long-suffering; which, by God's affistance, and by degrees, tho' perhaps but slow ones, is more likely to succeed, than heat, and vehemence, and any the violentest and most obstinate efforts of our own strength. When you find yourself tempted, be sure to ask advice; and when you see another so, deal with him gently. Support him with compassion, and administer all the comfort in your power, as you could not but wish to be treated yourself, were you in his afflicted circumstances.

The beginning of all temptations to wickedness, is the fickleness of our own mind, and want of trust in God. An inconstant and irresolute man is like a ship without a pilot, driven to and fro, at the mercy of every gust of wind. Metals are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of affliction, Ecclus. ii. 5. We seldom know the true extent of our own power, till temptation discover it to us. But watchfulness, which is always necessary, is chiefly so when the first assaults are made. For the enemy is more easily repulsed, if we never suffer him to get within us, but upon the very first approach draw up our forces, and fight him without the gate. "Twas well advised of the poet,

Take physick early; med cines come too late When the disease is grown inveterate.

And this will be more manifest, if we observe, by what methods and degrees temptations grow upon us. The first thing that presents itself to the mind, is a plain single thought; this is quickly improved into a strong imagination; that again enforced by a

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fensible delight; then follow evil motions; and when these are once stirred, there wants nothing but the assent of the will, and then the work is sinished. Now the first steps of this are seldom thought worth our care; often taken little notice of; so that the enemy frequently is got close up to us, and even within our trenches, before we observe him; and we have lost the day, for want of defending ourselves, while he was in a condition of being resisted. For the longer we defer the engagement, the weaker we grow, and the more our adversary gathers strength.

The season of these trials is various and uncertain. Upon some they are severer presently after their conversion, upon others towards the latter end of their days. Some have them so thick repeated, that their whole life is one continued conflict; and some again have but very sew and gentle trials. All which disferent cases are ordered by a just and wise God, who knows what each man deserves, and what he can undergo; and weighs all circumstances so justly, that his several dispensations are constantly subservient to the salvation and happiness of his chosen servants.

We ought not therefore to despair when temptations beset us; but excite our zeal, and pray to God more fervently, that he would be our present help and refuge in all our troubles; and, as St. Paul expresses it, That he would with the temptation also make a way to estape, that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble our selves under the trying hand of God, (I Cor. x, 13, I Pet, iv.) and patiently submit to his good pleasure in all our tribulations. For those who do so he will exalt in due time, and save them that he ef a meek and a contrite spirit, Psal. xxxiv.

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By temptations and afflictions a man is brought (as it were) to the test; by these his proficiency is measured, and easily discernable. The greater these are, the more acceptable the fufferer is to God, and the brighter lustre they add to his virtue. For, to be religious and zealous in the fervice of God, when no trials affail us, is no mighty matter. But if we can fuffer with patience and refignation, and continue steddy in the love and service of God, when he afflicts and fends bitterness into our souls; this argues a noble disposition, and promises an extraordinary perfection. Some perfons have come off with fafety and honour in very sharp and trying instances, and yet are worsted in common and trivial ones. And this case is capable of a very good improvement: for thus no doubt God gives men warning, that they should not presume upon their own strength, but humbly take fanctuary in him, in matters of difficulty; moved by the experience of that weakness, and frailty, which hath yielded to slighter and less violent temptations.

CHAP. XIV.

Against rash judging.

TURN your eyes inward upon yourself; for you can scarce exceed in judging your own actions, nor be too cautious and sparing in censuring those of others. Censuring indeed this deserves to be called in the worst sense of the word, rather than judging; if we consider, not only how unlikely to promote any good end, but how liable to infinite mistakes, and very often how exceeding sinful all such judgments are. But the examining and judge.

ing our own selves is a work very becoming us; such as we are qualified to undertake, and always turns to good account. We generally determine and give sentence, just as we stand affected to persons and things; our own passions and private prepossessions blind our minds, and either hinder us from discerning the truth, or from letting it have its due weight with us. Whereas, if we proceed from no other principle but the love of God; those matters, which disagree with our own sense of things, wou'd be allow'd fairer Consideration, and be less uneasy to us.

But oftentimes something foreign to the case in hand, either lurking privately in our own breast, or happening from without, engages and draws our minds after it. Many people act upon private respects and personal interests, even when least sensible that they do so. These men continue well satisfied, so long as things agree with their own inclination; but are out of all patience, upon the least difference and contradiction. And hence it comes to pass, that good correspondence is so often broke, and quarrels commenced between friends and neighbours, even men of piety and the most sacred professions, upon no other ground, than that they do not think and act alike.

The reason of this seems to be that mighty ascendant, which use and inveterate habits naturally gain upon us. We can very hardly be persuaded to change a practice or opinion, which we have been educated in, and long accustomed to; or to suppose, that other men see farther into things than ourselves. The man therefore, who leans more to his own understanding and study, than to that principle of virtue, which

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should dispose him to an entire submission to Christ and his doctrine, is by no means in a condition of having his mind enlightned by God. For God expects that we should be subject to him without any reserves, and thinks it fit, that a religious love and obedience should take place of our own reasonings, which by serious reslection wou'd be often found weak and inclusive.

CHAP. XV.

Of works of charity.

HIS is a constant and universal rule, that no confideration of any advantage, no regard of any person whatsoever, must ever prevail with us to do an ill thing. But the benefit of a person, who stands in need of our relief, is oftentimes a sufficient warrant for leaving a good thing undone; or for changing our measures, and chusing to do one good thing rather than another. For indeed, properly speaking, this is not so much an omitting to do well, as a prudent contrivance to do better. But, let the thing we do be what it will, it is only the defign with which we do it, that must recommend it: and, as without charity, both all we are, and all we do, fignify nothing; fo, where this is at the bottom, every thing we do, how mean foever in itself, is of very great value. For God observes by what springs we are moved; and measures our desert, by the dispofition of the heart, and not by the feeming worth of the gift, or the appearances of the action.

The man then, that loves a great deal, does a great deal; the man that does any thing well, in that one thing does a great deal; and he does well, who pre-

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fers the good of others before his own private pleafure or profit. That which frequently passes for charity, is really no better than a selfish and carnal principle. For how very seldom do men act upon other motives, than the gratifying their own inclinations, the doing their own will, the prospect of their own advantage, the expectation of return or reward; so consulting the convenience, not so much of others, as themselves?

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Now true and perfect Charity feeks not its own advantage; and if God, in his bounty, be pleafed to recompense it, yet this recompence is not the thing principally in view, but its great aim and end is the happiness of mankind. For the same reason charity envieth not, I Cor. xiii. because envy is a passion proceeding from felfishness and pride. And therefore the man, who acts upon a principle fo generous, as neither to feek his own private interest, nor to take fatisfaction in himself, but places all his content and blifs in God alone, is got above envy, and incapable of fo mean a passion. Charity looks upon God as the fole beginning and end of all good; the fource from whence it flows, and the immense ocean, in which it is swallowed up; the person from whom all the faints derive their righteousness, and in the fruition of whom the reward of their righteousness consists. And therefore the man posses'd of this principle, sets no undue value upon himself or others; he takes no part of the merit or honour to himself; he is not profuse in the commendation of others; but ascribes the whole glory of every virtuous action to the author of all the powers and faculties of his foul. Little need be faid, to shew, that one thus difposed, thus persuaded of God, as the only, the universal

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universal good, must have set his heart upon things above. For sure the least spark of his holy fire will serve to kindle in our breasts the love of heaven and spiritual joys; and suffice to convince us that all here below is full of vanity, and by no means an object worthy our affections.

CHAP. XVI.

Of bearing with other mens faults.

TATHEN you observe in yourself, or others, any thing amiss, which you would fain, but cannot cure, your duty in fuch cases is to endure it, till God fees fit to order matters otherwife. And a duty this is highly reasonable, if you consider, that possibly it is much wifer and better, that these faults should not be amended, than that they should. Perhaps God permits them for the trial and increase of your patience and humility, without which all our virtues are of no great regard in his fight. But at the same time that you ought to bear, you are no es obliged to pray against them; to beg that the ill example of them may be no hindrance to you in your christian course; and to implore the affistance of his Grace, for the bearing them in such a manner, that the provocations arising thence may never shake your temper, or betray you to any finful, or fo much as indecent, excess of passion.

If a man refuse to comply with good advice, or to reform upon admonitions and reproofs; you are not, after these offers of doing him service have been made and repeated, obliged to contend with him any onger. 'Tis better to commit the whole affair to God, and endeavour to effect that by your prayers,

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which your discourses could not do. Beseech him therefore, whose infinite wisdom knows how to bring good out of evil, that his will may be done, and his name glorified; and that all who ferve and worship him, may be led into such actions, as most contribute to these ends, and are well pleasing in his fight. And when you have thus discharged your part, set yourself resolutely to bear the greatest infirmities and faults of your brethren without any disturbance. And, for confirming this refolution, remember, that you also have many failings of your own, by which the patience of other people will have its turn of being exercised. And if you do (as certainly you cannot but) fee this; think how unreasonable it is, to expect you should make others in all particulars, what you would have them to be; when you cannot fo much as make yourfelf what you are fenfible you ought to And, indeed, nothing is more common, than to express exceeding zeal in amending our neighbours, and mighty indignation against their vices or imperfections; while at the same time we neglect the beginning at home, and either quite overlook, or feem highly contented with our own.

We take a pleasure in being severe upon others, but cannot endure to hear of our own faults. We are surprized and uneasy at the liberties they take with us, and wonder with what confidence they can pretend such a right over us; and yet there is nothing so extravagant, which we do not think we have a right to expect, and resent it highly to be denied. We set up for reformers, declaim at the wickedness of the age, and are all for suppressing and punishing it by rigorous laws; and yet are unwilling, that any check or restraint should be put upon our own free-

doms. This shews, how far we are from observing that great rule of equity, the loving our neighbour as ourselves; and from meteing to others the same measure, which we are content should be measured

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Further yet, supposing all men to be without faults, fome excellencies and virtues must be lost too: what would become of patience, what of forgiving and forbearing one another for Christ's fake, if there were no provocations to try our temper? And fuch there could not be, if every man were perfect, and did his duty. But, as the present condition of the world is order'd, God hath furnished us with constant occafions of bearing one another's burthens. For there is no man lives without his failings; no man that is fo happy as never to give offence; no man without his load of trouble; no man so sufficient, as never to need affistance; none so wise, but the advice of others may at some time or other be useful and necesfary for him: and therefore we should think ourselves under the strongest engagements to comfort, and releve, and instruct, and admonish, and bear with one another. Besides, we shall do well to reslect, that ifflictions and uneafy accidents may be the clearest ndication of a man's goodness, and the degrees of his improvement. For we mistake extremely, in magining, that any thing which happens to us from without, is the real cause of our doing well or ill: Adversity does not make virtue or vice, but exert nd draw them into practice; it does not change he man from what he was, but only discovers what he really is.

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CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Of a recluse life.

good understanding with others, must learn in order to it, in many cases to deny and subdue himself. If then you would keep your ground, or advance forward in piety and virtue, possess yourself entirely with the notion of your being no better than a stranger and pilgrim only here upon earth. As such, be content to forego the enjoyments and esteem of the world, and to be accounted a fool for Christ's sake. For till this be done, you are not duly prepared to retire, and enter into a course of life wholly devoted

to God and religion.

The peculiar habit, and tonfure, and other formalities, by which monafticks are diftinguish'd from common men, add nothing to their fanctity, nor contribute in the least to render them what they pretend to This can only be done by a temper, as different from the rest of the world, as their way of living; an entire change of manners, and an effectual mortification of their passions and desires. He that retreats out of any other defign, but the service and honour of God, and the falvation of his foul, will be fo far from avoiding mifery and trouble, that he will involve himself in new and greater troubles, and become more exquifitely wretched than the affairs of the world could make him. No body can continue easy in his own mind, who does not endeavour to become least of all, and servant of all.

Remember then that you come to obey, and not to govern: the state of life to which you are called, is

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a state of labour and hardship, and much suffering; not of leisure, and ease, and diversion. You do not so properly forsake, as change your business. For this sort of life is such a trial of men, as the fire is of gold: and none make good their post in it, but such as are content to humble themselves, and heartily and chearfully submit to any thing, for God's sake.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the examples of holy men in former ages.

I will much contribute to our progress and encouragement in christian virtues, to keep in view those lively patterns, which those holy fathers have set us, whose zeal and exalted piety shone clear in former generations. For, by observing the brightness of their lustre, we shall at the same time discern the faintness and dimness of our own light, and blush to find the present age so much eclipsed by the unequal comparison. Alas! how poor and mean are our attainments when put into the ballance with theirs! Those excellent good persons, those affectionate friends and followers of Christ, served God instantly, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labour and weariness, in watchings and fastings, in prayers and holy meditations, in many persecutions and sharp reproaches.

Bleffed God! how many, how grievous miferies and hardships did the apostles and martyrs, the confessors and virgins endure heretofore! And not they only, but all those brave and generous souls in the primitive and purer state of the church, who made it the study of their whole lives to tread in the steps of their meek and suffering saviour! These heaven-

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ly minded persons paid no regard to their own lives, that they might preferve them unto life eternal. How very auftere, how entirely mortified, was the conversation of the antient hermits in the defarts? how long, how sharp the temptations they underwent? how fierce and frequent their conflicts with the enemy of fouls? how constant and fervent their prayers? how rigorous their Abstinence, how unblemished their chastity? how eager their defires, how indefatigable their endeavours, after higher degrees of perfection? how vigorous and gallant the war they waged against their vices and rebellious appetites? how pure and uncorrupt all their Intentions, how free from any mixture of worldly prospects, and fincerely fix'd upon God and his glory? the whole day they employ'd in hard labour, the whole night in devotion. From which their very labours did not hinder them; for even these were consecrated too, by the frequent intermingling of prayers and holy ejaculations.

Their great care in a word, was, that no portion of the time God gave them in the body, might be fpent unprofitably: and what they laboured to make an improvement, their zeal made a delight. For time in their efteem was much too fwift: and their devotions so far from creating weariness, that every hour feemed short, and fnatched away those joys too hastily, which they felt in conversing with him whom their foul loved. Their thoughts were so intent, their raptures so entertaining, so ravishingly sweet, that they became almost all spirit, and quite forgot their bodies, and the care necessary for supporting them in life. Riches, and honours, and greatness, and friends, and relations were now no longer their concern

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concern. How should they? when even a part of their own persons ceased to be so; and providing those things, without which mortals cannot subsist, was now grown a trouble, and to persons so abstracted from sless and sense, a painfull and unseasonable interruption of better and much more important Business.

These men 'tis true, had no earthly possessions, but they who were poor in that Respect, were exceeding-wealthy in another, rich in the favour of God, and abounding in excellent virtues. What they wanted of outward comforts, was much better supplied by the plentiful communications of divine graces, the inward refreshments and unspeakable consolations of the bleffed spirit. These strangers to the world were intimately acquainted with its maker and Lord; and, how meanly foever they might think of themselves, or how despicable they might appear in the eyes of others, yet in the fight of God they were particularly dear, highly honourable and They persevered in their humility, and fincere obedience, in their courage and constancy, their meekness, and patience, and great charity. And by this continuance in well-doing, and contented fuffering, they made daily advances in spiritual perfection, and attained to a wonderfull high pitch of grace and favour with God. By this exemplary piety they are become proper patterns for the imitation of all devout men in after-ages: and tho' but a few in number, ought to encourage and prevail upon us more powerfully to rival their uncommon zeal, than the numerous Examples of negligent and lukewarm christians should do, to slacken and suffer our piety to grow cold.

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To these we may add the ardent devotion of those holy men, who retired from the world into cloifters and cells, which at their first institution, were places of great piety and fevere virtue. Their prayers were frequent and devout, their Emulation in spiritual perections noble, their Discipline strict and well ordered; their obedience to superiors modest and respectful. Even those footsteps of their piety still remaining, from which their fuccessors have fince so scandaloufly degenerated, are sufficient to inform us, that the first combatants in this war against the world and the flesh, were men of gallantry, and just re-But now alas! how wretched a pass are we come to, when it is counted a mighty matter, if here and there one keep himself from transgressing the Rules of his order, and patiently submit to those Exercises, which his profession imposes upon him?

Oh, what a miserable age of cold indifference and wicked carelesness are we fallen into! how are the the holy slames of primitive zeal extingished! and instead of being a delight, how great a weariness, how insupportable a burthen, are religious duties and exercises become to us! how wretched is that stupidity, how profound that sleep, which now oppresses the spirit of mankind, when so many bright examples cannot prevail with us to shake off our sloath and slumber, nor awake our souls into any tolerable concern for banished piety and neglected Virtue!

CHAP. XIX.

The Exercise of a true Religious Person.

HE life of a christian, who hath dedicated himself to the service of God, should abound with eminent virtues of all kinds, that he may be really

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really the same person, which he is by outward appearance and profession. Indeed he ought not only to be the same, but much more, in his inward difposition of soul; because he professes to serve God, who fees the inward parts, a fearcher of the heart and reins, a God, and father of spirits: and therefore, fince we are always in his fight, we should be exceeding careful to avoid all impurity, all that may give offence to him; whose eyes cannot behold iniquity. We should, in a word, so far as mortal and frail nature can, imitate the bleffed angels in all manner of holiness, since we, as well as they, are always in his presence. To this purpose it would be expedient, daily to renew our resolutions of living well, and every morning to refresh and quicken that real, with which they were made at first. To beg of God that he would help us, and enable us that lay to begin well; to begin, I say; for all that we have done hitherto ought in lowliness of mind to eem, and to be acknowledged by us, as nothing.

Great diligence and watchfulness is necessary, in order to discharging faithfully what we have intended, and resolved zealously. For if they, who are most sincere and vigorous in their purposes, are yet too often weary, and remiss in their performance, what do we think must needs become of those who purpose but very seldom, or very coldly? 'Tis true, indeed, the occasions of our falling off, or fainting in our minds, are various and many; and seldom do we allow ourselves in any omission of religious duties, without even thus perceiving a very sensible batement and decay of zeal. The perseverance of tood men, in the midst of so many difficulties and vocations, must be ascribed to God's savour and as-

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fistance, more than to any care and wisdom of their own. And good men have always this notion of the thing: for they depend upon God for the success of all they do, even of their best and wisest undertakings. A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps, says Solomon, Prov. xvi. 9. We may contrive and act as seems most advisable; but, as the very preparations of the heart, ib. i, by which we do so, are from the Lord; so is the event of our

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having done it entirely in his disposal.

If at any time a religious exercise be omitted upon the account of some other act of piety, or some work of charity at that time inconfistent with it; this does us no differvice, and the omiffion is eafily repaired. But if thro' any loathness or indisposition of mind, if thro' laziness or any voluntary neglect of our own, our customary devotions be passed over; this is from a wicked cause, and will not fail to have a very ill effect upon us. When we keep our zeal with all our might, and do our very best, yet even then we shall find ourselves often defective. But, tho' we cannot arrive at absolute perfection, nor conquer all our frailties, nor prevent all our hindrances in goodness; yet ought not this to discourage us from striving and refolving. And, when we do fo, we shall do well not to content ourselves with general intentions, but bend our force against some particular thing: and chiefly against such, as we have found by experience to be the greatest and most troublesome obstruction to our doing well. The condition of our affairs without, and that of our own fouls within, must be dillgently confidered, and reduced into the best order we can; because both the circumstances of the one, and

the dispositions of the other, contribute greatly to

our furtherance in piety.

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It may be, you cannot at all times recollect and call yourfelf to account, but certainly you cannot want opportunities of doing fo once every day at east. The morning or the evening are proper for it. In the morning you may lay out your bufiness for the day following; and, at the return of night again, you may reflect what hath past in the daytime; how your thoughts, and words, and actions, have agreed with that scheme of behaviour you laid before yourself. Where you have transgressed, how far exceeded, or fallen short, and in what instances (for, alas! it is but too likely that you have in many) offended God and man. In this scheme you form of living well, quit yourfelf like a man, in refifting he affaults of the devil. To this end begin with keeping a strict hand over your appetite; for when you have once attained to a rigid and masterly fopriety, all other fleshly defires and temptations will be vanquished and kept under with much less diffifulty. To the same purpose, beware of idleness; be constantly in action; let reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or contriving somewhat for he good of others, employ your leifure hours. Some bodily exercises are very fit to be used, but these ence will require prudence in the choice of them; for on to all are not equally convenient; and therefore the with nature and degrees of them must be considered, as dilivell as the temper and constitution of the person we consulted, to render them profitable.

and Some religious exercises the community is con-the erned in, and they must be attended to in publick. Others are personal, and these will be best persormed

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in private. This distinction is of great use, to keep men from acting improperly; for even a good thing may lose much of its gracefulness and commendation, by being done out of due place and time. Another necessary caution, which many good people stand in need of, is, that you should not be so zealously bent upon any private devotions or duties, as for their fakes to flight or disuse the publick; for these require at least an equal degree of your esteem and care in the attendance of them. But when you have discharged your duty in that point, and done all that your particular station, or the commands of your superiors, require from you; then is the proper season, and then you will do well, to return into your own breast, and employ the remainder of your time, as pious and religious purposes shall direct. And here again a prudent choice is needful; for all forts, even of religious entertainments, are not fuited alike to our spiritual advantage. Some difference arises from the confideration of the persons, and another very visible one from the different times and seasons of using them. Some are more proper for holy days, others for common days; some for festivals, others for fasts; some for a time of temptation and affliction, others for a peaceful and serene state of mind: some to persons in grief, or under calamitous circumstances; others for prosperity, when the spirits flow gaily, and our hearts rejoice and fing for the goodness of the Lord. Particularly it will be convenient in an especial manner to renew and raile our fouls, by very frequent and solemn acts of piety and devotion, at the constant returns of all the christian festivals. For these should represent to our minds the eternal uninterrupted festival of joy and thanks,

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thanks, celebrated by the faints in heaven. And this should put our souls upon the wing, inflame our devotion, mount us up thither, and make us act even beyond ourselves; more chearfully, more vigorously; as if we were just then going to receive that glorious reward of our labour, which these glad seasons bring so lively ideas of to our thoughts.

And, if the time of our receiving that reward be still delayed, let us be so thankful for a longer time given us here, as at the same time to be humbled by that very length of life, which the generality of the world are apt to esteem the greatest happiness that can befal them. Let us endeavour to do God still better service, but let us suspect, that we have not served him yet as we ought. For, if we had, he would not have put off our recompence to a farther day; and probable it is, that he does not tranflate us to heaven as yet, because we are not fit for it. And let us therefore double our care to qualify ourfelves for that glory, which in his own appointed time shall not fail to be manifested in us. Come he most assuredly will, and blessed is that servant when his lord, when he cometh, shall find watching, Luke xii. 37. Verily I say unto you, he will make him ruler over all his goods, and partaker of the joy of his lord, Matt. xxiv. 47.

CHAP. XX.

Love of solitude and plence.

RESERVE a convenient proportion of your time for privacy and conversing with your-felf; and let this be spent in frequent and thankful reflections upon the mercies of God; and in reading good

good books. Among which I advise you by all means to let alone nice disputes, and unprofitable fpeculations; and keep to fuch fubjects, as may be proper for the exciting your zeal, and quickening your affections, rather than such as may employ the fubtilty of your wit. Never fear that you shall want leifure for these good purposes. For if you will prevail with yourfelf to abate the mere impertinencies of life, the unnecessary conversations, the time spent in hearing and telling of news, in enquiring after, and spreading about idle reports, and fuch as are either faulty and frivolous wastings of your time; you cannot want sufficient leisure, and great opportunities, for cherishing and improving holy and heavenly meditations. Thus did the most eminent faints industriously avoid company and business, and chuse to converse with God in private, as much, and as often, as possibly they could.

'Tis a good reflection, which the philosopher made of himself; that he never was in other mens company, but he came out of it less a man than he went in. And this is what we may frequently confirm by our own experience, after a great deal of discourse hath passed. 'Tis certainly much easier for a man to restrain himself from talking at all, than to enter in discourse, and not say more than becomes him: infinitely easier to live at home and fee no body; than to go abroad into company, and return innocent. A man therefore who makes inward and spiritual perfection his great end, must imitate the bleffed Jesus, and often withdraw himself from the multitude. No one is qualified to converse in publick, who is not highly contented without fuch conversation; nor to entertain, or receive en-

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tertainment from others, who cannot entertain himfelf alone with fatisfaction. No man is fit to govern, who hath not learned how to obey: no man can enjoy mirth with fafety, who is not at the same time in a condition of rejoicing in a good conscience. None is fit to speak freely, but he who can, without any violence to himself, refrain his tongue, or keep silence altogether.

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enent Accordingly we may observe, that the pleasures and inward security of the best men have always been tempered with the fear of God. Nor was their humility or their care one whit abated, in consideration of those extraordinary virtues, and abundant measures of divine grace, in which they excelled common christians. But the security of wicked men, and that satisfaction they take in themselves, spring from pride and haughtiness of temper; and therefore the constant effects of it are an undue contempt of others, and a salse opinion of themselves.

Never flatter yourself with an expectation of absolute safety in this life, whatever your condition, how far soever retired from the world, or out of the way of temptation, it may seem to be. For it often happens, that those whom the world esteems in strength and virtue above common men, have been involved in dangers proportionably greater than theirs; meerly upon the account of the too consideration they had of their own abilities. And this consideration makes the being tempted sometimes a blessing, greater than that of living altogether easy and free from temptation. For the oftner we are attack'd, the greater check this gives to our self-conceit and spiritual security: and the more we are afflicted, the less apt we shall be to love or use the

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external advantages of this world, beyond the bounds of decency and moderation. And if a man could fo perfectly draw off his mind from these, as never to pursue any transitory pleasure; never to engage himself with the world; O what blessed, what perpetual peace of conscience would that man feel, and even be ravished with! Nay, could we but cut off all our unprofitable and groundless fears and cares, and employ our thoughts upon such subjects only, as are weighty and useful; such as promote the honour and service of God, our own salvation, and the good of others; how easy and quiet, how free from all reproach, would such a one's breast be to him!

No man deserves inward and heavenly comforts, who does not diligently examine, and willingly af-To be qualified for this folitude, it is absolutely needful to observe that method recommended by the pfalmist, commune with your own beart in your chamber, and be still, Pfal. iv. Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door about thee, says our Saviour, Matt. vi. Advice, which can never be more seasonable, than upon these occasions: for the closet will give you the fatisfaction, which it is fcarce possible not to lose in a more publick place. And if the closet be not pleasant, the only reason is, that it hath been less frequented than it ought. To those who at first use this retirement carefully, it ministers a pleasure and secret consolation, above what any company or diversion in the world can pretend to.

It is by filent and folitary study, that the soul gets acquainted with the hidden mysteries of scripture. Here she finds those sloods of pious tears, by which holy men wash themselves day and night; here she contracts a familiarity and free intercourse with God,

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fo much the closer and more intimate, as she removes to a greater distance from the noise and hurry of the world. Think not then, that the man who withdraws from his friends and acquaintance is perfectly alone. No, he only changes that for better company, and is visited in his quiet retreats by God and his holy angels. A wise man would rather chuse to live thus unobserved, and to prosecute the business of his soul without interruption, than even to work miracles, and attract universal admiration and applause, at the expence of neglecting his own safety.

It is highly agreeable to the character of a person entirely devoted to God, to stir but seldom abroad, to decline being publickly seen of men, and to be as little fond of seeing the world. For to what purpose indeed should any one be eager to see that

which he must not enjoy?

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The world passeth away, and all the defires thereof, ays the apostle, 1 John ii. 17. Our sensual affections invite and entice us; but when the moment of gratifying that inclination is once over, what have you got by the bargain, but ferious remorfe, and unettled temper of mind? He that goes out full of atisfaction, often returns as full of melancholy and lifgust; and many a merry evening occasions a sad norning. Thus all the pleasures of sense cares and court us at the first meeting, but at their parting eave a sting behind, and gall our hearts with sharp and killing pains. What can you fee in any other place, which the most retired grove or desart will not present to your eye? Here you survey the heaens, here view the earth, here fee the feveral elenents, which are the feeds and first ingredients, of which H

which the whole world and every creature in it are

compounded

But what can you fee either here or any where elfe, which is of long continuance? You expect, perhaps, that variety will fatisfy you: alas! it cannot be. For, suppose you could at one view have all things under the sun set before you; what is the there even in this, fave only the beholding them had with your eyes? Turn then those eyes where they may gaze with profit. Look up to God on high; fix them upon the throne of Grace in prayer, and En continue stedfast and firm in this, 'till you obtain pardon for your fins and errors. Leave the vanities of der the world to the vain men of the world; but confider der that you are a child of God, and therefore bend followed your thoughts and labours entirely to those thing wo which your heavenly father requires at your hand min Invite that Jesus, in whom your soul delights, into of your apartment; there folace yourfelf with his love; on for in that conversation only true peace and sold lers joy are to be found. If this seem a paradox, I must y a inform you what is the true occasion of its doing to t is Had you never mingled yourself with the world structure. nor imbibed any of its vain notions, your mind had contibeen more fettled and composed. But now the its nost of novelty hath taken hold of you, and it must con he contibe to the contibe to the contibe to the contibe to the continue to the fome uneafiness to cure this evil. And 'till that cure ears be effected, peace and perfect evenness of tempo A you cannot have, nor be reconciled to folitude, and not the fubstantial pleasures that attend it.

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CHAP. XXI.

Compunction of heart.

HE that would grow in virtue and grace, must be sure to preserve a constant awful sense of he divine majesty upon his mind; checking by this holy fear all his indecent liberties, keeping his appeites and affections under strict discipline; and not gh; letting himfelf loofe to light or extravagant mirth. and Employ yourself therefore in humbling and afflicting your own mind, and this will certainly lead you to a devout and truly christian temper. For infinite adonfi- rantage is to be had by these zealous exercises, which folly and inconfideration quickly lose again. One would wonder indeed, how men can indulge their mirth to so extravagant a degree, when the miseries into of this life, and the fins we have to account for, are over to many and so great, that a man who seriously consi-folia lers the danger his soul is in, can very hardly be mermust y at all, without some sudden damp upon his spirits. g in it is from the levity of our own unthinking minds, orld stupid forgetfulness of our sinful condition, and a continuing insensible of those sorrows which ought nost tenderly to affect us, that we so often indulge he excesses of laughter and gaiety, when sight and ears would much better become us.

Assure yourself, there can be no true liberty, no

and innocent merriment, without the fear of God, and good conscience. Happy therefore is the man, who can disengage himself from all those hindrances, which the business and diversions of the world cast h his way; and can give his thoughts up entirely that godly forrow, which worketh repentance and

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falvation. Happy he, that can abandon every thing by which his conscience is defiled or burthened; and set himself at liberty from treacherous and ensuring pleasures. And this may be compassed by resolution and constancy. For, how difficult and contrary sever it may seem to the general way of the world, and our own former practice; yet no habit is so strong, but by frequent and manly attempts the direct contrary habit may be acquired and confirmed.

If you will firmly fet yourself to let other people affairs alone, they will follow the example, and not concern themselves with yours. Do not therefore create unnecessary trouble to yourself, by making other mens business your own, and involve your thoughts and cares in matters of persons above you Leave the great ones of the world to manage their own concerns, and keep your eyes and observation at home. Your own foul is the thing you ought to look after. This requires your nicest inspection, and utmost diligence; and the censuring and correcting yourself is a duty, which should take place above the advising or reproving the dearest friend you have It may be, this referve may be interpreted fullenness, and lose you the favour and good esteem of men; but let not that loss afflict you. There can be no fo just ground of diffatisfaction and remorfe, as the not behaving yourfelf with all the strict virtue and circumspection, which becomes a person who hath renounced the world, and devoted himfell to the service of God. 'Tis true, an honourable opinion of us is a comfort: but it is sometimes bet ter to want variety of comforts, than to have them This is often the case with advantages merely human, the external and the worldly; and, as for thole

those which are spiritual, and derived from God, if we be either deprived of these, or not sensible of their sweet refreshment; the fault is our own, who neglect to put ourselves into a fit disposition for them, by godly sorrow for our sins, and abandoning those vain and outward comforts, which should make

room for the substantial and heavenly.

Get therefore a true and perfect knowledge of yourself; see and confess, that you deserve not any divine consolation, nay, that you do really deserve defertion, and forrow, and much mifery. man's mind is inflamed with a truly religious zeal, this world appears not only flat and infipid, but very bitter and loathfome to him. A good man can never fail of discovering just matter of grief, and many occasions that provoke his tears. For, whether he consider his own circumstances, or those of other men, he will find that no man here is exempted from calamities. And the more closely he confiders his own condition, the greater still will be his concern. But the misfortunes from without might be born with better temper, were there not much more grievous from within. For, of all the miseries that humble our souls with sadness, none are so justly lamented as our fins, and infirmities; the wretched load and incumbrance these are to our conscience; and the indisposition, the disability they bring us under, of attending without distraction to holy duties and heavenly contemplations.

By these we are engaged upon trisling and unprofitable thoughts, and diverted from weighty and useful subjects. For would we but turn the current of our thoughts another way, the effect would be visi-

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ble and very happy. If we did but feriously reflect, how certainly we must die, as often as we think how long it is likely we must live; we should be more zealous and diligent to amend our lives, and provide for that important change. And would we but fet before our minds a lively representation of those dreadful torments which await the damned in hell; it were not possible fure to shrink back as we do, from the austerities and mortifications of a religious life; or to suppose any labour and pain which we can undergo in the mean while, a hardship not most willingly to be chosen, for the preventing so dreadful a condemnation. But now, because these things are but feldom, and very flightly thought upon, and we, in tenderness to our own ease, much rather submit to the soothing impressions of present deceitful pleafures, than to those harsh and cutting ones of future misery and anguish; we still go on in the fame coldness, and indifference, and indulge our floth at the expence of our virtue.

I grant, indeed, that some religious severities are tedious and painful to the body. But the fault does not always lie there; for the body sometimes complains and droops, not so much from its own suffering, as from the meanness and cowardice of the soul, which ought to encourage and support it. Beg therefore of God most earnestly, that he would kindle in your hearts a true christian courage and fervent zeal. Dare to entertain yourself upon the most ungrateful, when they are profitable and necessary subjects. Prefer the mournings of a pious penitent before all the vain jollity of a wicked and unthinking world; and pray that God would do to thee, what the psalmist says he

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. he does to his own people, even feed thee with the bread of tears, and give thee plenteousness of tears to drink, Pfal. lxxx. 5.

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CHAP. XXII.

The miserable condition of man confidered.

TT 7 Retched thou art, O man, wherefoever thou art; wretched thou must be, which way soever thou turnest thyself: Beset on all sides with miseries, without remedy, without any possibility of escape by human helps, and only to be avoided by taking fanctuary in God. Why then art thou difquieted at crosses and disappointments; when these are the portion of all mankind? It is not yours and mine alone, but the greatest, the best men drink of the bitter cup: And no man ever lived in uninterrupted happiness: None ever succeeded in all his wishes and attempts; none ever was above calamities, or free from vexation of spirit. Since therefore so ordained it is, that all must suffer and be miserable, are all equally so? No, there are different conditions and degrees of fuffering; and his is certainly the best and most comfortable, who is called and difposed to suffer for the sake of God and a good conscience.

It is usual for men, who know no better, to envy and admire the rich, the great, the honourable; to imagine that princes and persons of plentiful fortunes are compleatly happy. But this is the effect of great weakness and inconsideration. If therefore we would rectify fuch mistaken apprehensions, let us get a right notion of spiritual and heavenly advantages. These will convince us of what poor account all worldly

enjoyments

enjoyments should be in our esteem: How very lit. tle, how mere a nothing they are; how hard and hazardous to be attained; how uncertain the preservation of them, and how full of trouble and anxious care, even while we have them. And who would be fond of that, which can neither be got, nor loft, no, nor kept neither, without fear, and forrow, and perpetual folitude? Surely then the happiness of man does not confift in the abundance of the things which be possesseth, Luke xii. 15. 'Tis sensless and absurd to think it can. And if no proportion of worldly goods, tho' never so large, can exempt us from mifery; then a competent measure of them ought to fatisfy us. For miserable we must be with less or more. The very living here upon earth, without any additional calamity, would make us inevitably fo. The more a man defires and labours to be like God, the less agreeable relish he hath of life; because he is so much more sensible, more thoroughly convinced of the frailty and corruption of human mature. For, what is this viciffitude, this daily round of eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, weariness and rest, and the many other necessities, which the condition of morality enflaves us to? Doubtless it is a mighty burthen and affliction, to men whole minds are wholly fixed upon higher things, and then whose only ambition it is to get above fin and infirmity.

For the diffresses and wants of the outward-man, are a fore hindrance and great oppression to the inward; and we shall not perhaps injure David's sense,
by supposing even these included in that petition,
where he begs of God to deliver him out of his troubles, Psal. xxv. 17. But wretched are they indeed,
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who are not fensible of their wretchedness; and yet more fo still are those vain people, who are even in ove with it; who dote upon this mortal life, which exposes them to it; and cannot think of parting with t at any rate, even when in fuch uncomfortable cirrumstances, that all their time and care is scarce suficient to furnish them with provisions necessary for he support of it. And yet these infatuated creatures are content to lay themselves out upon toil and trouble; and, might they but be suffered to continue here for ever, could dispense with any concern for God and godness, and willingly forego the hopes and ever-

afting happiness of a heavenly kingdom.

O foolish and slow of heart to understand and beout lieve your true interest? How deep are you immersed n flesh and sense? How sottishly deluded with dross, and fond of vanities which cannot profit? Have you no notion left of any thing but body? No regard for hly a future enduring substance? Raise your affections up na- to nobler enjoyments, and disengage them from those and gross, those empty objects, which if you still persist ari in the love and pursuit of, you will one day be taught by fad experience, how poor and despicable they reof you have thrown away upon them. Be perfuaded and then by reason and religion, and do not provoke God fire o convince you by torments and too late remorse, of low fatal consequence the love of this World is, to nan, all that are immoderately fond of it. View well in-hose illustrious patterns of mortification and heaven-nse, y-mindedness, which the primitive saints and savou-ion, ites of Christ have set you. These great good men had fmall regard to the pleasures of the sense, and eed, glittering gaieties of this world, but kept their eyes

and hearts intent upon eternal joys: Those were their hope, their delight, the earnest and only longing of their fouls. And therefore the only one, left if their affections were at all divided, the love of the things that are feen, should fasten down their hearts to mean and earthly objects, and hinder them from foaring up on high to the infinitely more precious things that are not feen.

This is indeed a work of pains and time; but let not that confideration drive you to despair of attaining an heavenly temper of mind. The undertaking is great, 'tis true; and the time allowed for it but fhort; but still this short space is enough, if you will take care to make the best of it. Up then, and he doing; do not purpose well to day, and put off the execution to a farther Day, but rather argue yourself into action by fuch reflections as these. This very instant is the proper time; this the Season of amendment, and fighting the good fight. It is by hardship and fuffering, that men recommend themselves to the acceptance and favour of God. He hath ordained that fire and water, diffress and tribulation should be the way that leads to refreshment and true blik Without some violence upon thyself, sin cannot be subducd, nor evil customs broken. Without some uneafiness and pain we cannot live; and, while we carry this body of flesh about us, these will make a inseperable part of the burthen. We wish indeed for ease and untroubled satisfaction; but, as the condition of mankind stands at present, we wish in vain For in losing the innocence of our nature, we los our happiness too; and as both left us, so both mul be restored together. Patience is now become a no ceffary virtue, and we must be content to wait the

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feafon of God's mercy; when he shall fully repair our breaches, heal our infirmities, put a period to our unrighteousness, absolve the guilt, blot out the remembrance of them, and cause mortality to be swallowed up of life.

In the mean time, it cannot methinks but be a mighty mortification, to confider how exceeding prone this frail nature of ours is to fin. To-day you confess your fins to God, and to-morrow you act those very fins over again, which you lamented but the day before. This hour you resolve to be watchful, and take good heed to all your ways; and the very next hour you run on as giddily and rashly as ever, forget your resolutions, and stand more selfcondemned than if you had never resolved at all. So great reason is there for thinking very meanly of ourfelves, and disclaiming all vain confidences in any thing we are, or do. But these so sudden and frequent relapses are not our misfortunes, but our faults. They are indeed the consequents of our frailty; but that frailty would not affect us to any confiderable legree, did not we contribute to it by our own negigence and inconstancy. And a small neglect will oon undo, what cost much time and labour to effect; nay, what could not have been effected even o neither, had not almighty God feconded our endeavours with his divine affistance.

But if we cool so very quickly, and cannot watch me hour, what will become of us at last, and how shall we persevere in faithfulness unto the end? Wretched are we indeed, if we faint and grow weary, if we give out and seek refreshment, as if we were already safe, and in absolute peace; when we have scarce begun the battle, and gained but little ground

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in holiness and reformation of manners. Alas! we are as yet but raw beginners; fo far from complet mafters in our business, that we have still need to learn and practife the very first rules of living over again, before we can be so perfect as we wish and ought to be. Nor should we disdain to do so, if those condescensions can prove of use to us.

C H A P. XXIII.

Meditations concerning death.

CINCE life is of short and uncertain continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you, and take good heed how you employ it. To-day the man is vigorous, and gay, and flourishing, and to-morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little time carries him out of our fight, and very little more out of our remembrance. Other hardness of mens hearts! O the wretched stupidity! that fixes their whole thoughts and care upon the present, and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any regard, to that which must come hereafter. Whereas, in truth, every work, and word, and thought, ought to be so ordered, as if it were to be our last; and we instantly to die, and render an account of it. Would we entertain ourselves more with the thoughts of death, it would be less a terror to us: for, in proportion as our lives amend, our fears will abate, and a clear conscience will enable us to meet death with undaunted cou-However flesh and frailty may impose upon us, yet, be affured, 'tis greater wisdom to be afraid of finning, than to be afraid of dying; a greater bleffing to preserve our innocence, than to prolong

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lour lives. And whence is all this fear and anxiety? Is it because we are not fit to die? But if you are not fit to-day, how do you propose to be so to-morrow? Alas! to-morrow is uncertain; neither you, nor I, nor any man can depend upon it. Or, if we could, yet what does it avail to live, though it were much longer, when we by longer living grow so little better? Assure yourself, long life is far from being always a blessing. Too many, God knows, are so far from growing holier, as they grow older, that the number of their days only adds to the number of their fins, and renders their account more

heavy hereafter.

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Happy is that man who can comfort himself with having employed any one day of his life fo perfectly well, as he might, and ought to have done. Many reckon up the years of their conversion with great fatisfaction, and think it a mighty matter that they have fo long abandoned the world and a vicious And yet, when the time they boast of comes to be compared with the improvements they have made, how shamefully little is the good they have done? If dying now be terrible, yet remember that living longer may be dangerous; and many, many a man finds too great occasion to wish, that it had pleased God to take him away sooner. Happy therefore is he who keeps the hour of death constantly in view? And from this prospect of what must come, takes care to reconcile himself to it, and to put his foul into a proper temper for it, when it does come.

If you attend at any time upon a death-bed, and fee another in his parting agonies; confider that this friend is gone the same way where you must shortly follow

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follow him. In the morning, question whether you may live till night; and when night comes, do not too confidently promife yourfelf another morning. Thus shall you be in a constant expectation, and ina good disposition to die. And be fure so to live always, that death may never overtake you unprovided, nor its suddenest approach surprize you. Many are fnatched away in an inftant, and die when they were not in the least aware of it, for in fuch an hour as we think not, the son of man cometh, Matt. xxiv. 44. Let not the preparation I am advising, be neglected, as a melancholy unpleasant thing; such as embitters life, and damps mens present enjoyment; for be alfured, whatever fatisfaction you may take now, when that last hour draws on, it will give you quite other notions of the matter. And the reflections upon your past improvidence and neglect will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the most follicitous forecast for dying well, can possibly be in the mean time.

O how wise, how happy is that man, who makes it his daily care to be such while he liveth as he defires to be found when he comes to die! We may cherish a good hope and great assurances of leaving the world to our comfort and infinite advantage, is, while we continue in it we can bring our selves to neglect and despise it if we be zealous to improve in in virtue; in love with discipline and mortification is we attend to the exercise of repentance; if we be of an humble and obedient disposition; content to deny ourselves, and ready to undergo any hardship for Christ's sake. But if these qualifications be necessary, they are necessary to be attained in health. For then a man is in a condition to strive, and to exert himself.

elf; but when sickness is upon him, it is a great quetion what he will be able to do, or whether any thing at all. Whatever the generality of the world may imagine, who put off their great work till such improper seasons; yet sure it is, that sew, but very sew, are reformed by a sick bed. And they who defer their repentance and amendment till then, seldom, alas! repent as they ought, or are amended in

good earnest.

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Depend not upon the affiftance of your relations and acquaintance: nor cherish an imagination so vain. as that their prayers hereafter can effect, what you never endeavoured to effect here. These can do you no fervice; but if they could, yet, when once gone, you will be forgotten much fooner than you are willing to believe. And why should you rest upon their care, when you cannot be prevailed with for your own? Can it be supposed, they should be more concerned for your falvation, than you are, whose proper interest it is? But supposing they could do you good, yet, even then, 'tis better you should do your own business; better, in regard of the person, and better in regard of the time: for now is the feafon of accepance, now is the day of falvation. And therefore this moment is the fittest for your purpose: the sooner you change, the better: live then while you may; and begin from the present minute to live so, that you may live for ever. For if you fuffer the happy ppportunity to flip thro' your hands, you will wish for it afterwards, when it is too late; and you may perhaps be reduced to fuch circumstances, that one day, one hour, for making your peace with God may not be obtained; no, not when you would gladly give,

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

give, were it at your disposal, the whole world to

purchase it.

Consider then, my friend and fellow christian, confider what a rifque you run by your delays; think, what mifery and danger, what confusion and despair it is now in your power to prevent, by living like a man that remembers he must die. And therefore to fpend every hour, that when your last draws on, you may receive it with joy and hope, instead of fear and aftonishment. Learn now to die daily, to die to fin and the world, that you may then begin to live with Christ. Learn now to despise all here below, that you may then be difengaged, and at perfect liberty to leave all and follow Christ. Subdue your body now by mortification and felf-denial, and you shall then have great boldness in the day of tribulation.

Does any expectation of long life encourage you to defer putting this good advice in execution speedily? Nay, but reflect, fond man, how uncertainly you can promise yourself one poor single day. How many instances have you before your eyes, or fresh in your remembrance, of persons miserably deluded and disappointed in this hope, and hurried out of the body without any warning at all? How often have you been surprized with the news of this friend being run thro', another drowned in croffing the water, a third breaking his neck by a fall, a fourth fallen down dead at table, or choaked with his meat, a fifth feized with an appoplexy at play, 2 fixth burnt in his bed, a feventh murthered, an eighth killed by thieves, a ninth struck with lightning, or blafting, or pestilence, a tenth swallowed

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up in an sarthquake. Such vast variety of deaths furround us, and so fleeting a shadow is the life of man.

And if any of these happens to be your case, who hall help, who can fave you when the precious opportunity is fled and loft? Be doing then betime; or, tho' you cannot fo much as guess at the hour and nanner of your own death, yet safe you are, or may e, if you will provide against it. Use time then while you have it; make haste to be rich toward God, and let religion and your own falvation be your hief, your only concern. Make yourself friends vbile you may, who when you fail may receive you into verlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9.

Behave yourself as a stranger and pilgrim upon arth, and do not immoderately set your thoughts on ings which do not belong to you. For fojourers are not proprietors, and therefore such should not cep their affections upon things, which they are aving very shortly. Raise your soul to God and let it well there, not where you bave no continuing city, eb. xiii. 14. Look up to that which is so: send your ayers, and tears, and earnest desires before you ither; that when God calls, you may readily follow person, and make a happy exchange of this mise-

ble world for a better.

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CHAP. XXIV.

the last judgment, and the eternal punishment of ungodly men.

Hatsoever thou takest in band, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss, says the wise son Sirach, Ecclus. vii. 36. And certainly this would prove

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prove a most useful direction, if we by the end understand that last great account, which will one day be required of all our actions. For how powerful, how happy a restraint should we live under, did we but seriously reflect, and constantly ask ourselves, how we shall dare to stand before that strict and righteous judge, to whom all bearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are bid? One who cannot, like other judges, be diverted from the steddy course of justice; blinded by bribes and presents, or softned by subtle extenuations, or imposed upon by feigned excuses, and studied evasions; but who weighs all persons and causes by the eternal standard of equity and truth. Ah, wretched guilty creature ! ah, stupid, unthinking sinner ! that tremblest at the frown of a man like thy self, and does not fear that bar, where nothing can turn to thy prejudice, but open and notorious faults! How wilt thou appear at this tribunal, or what plea canft thou urge in bar of fentence, to him who needs no evidence, but is himself privy to thy most concealed impieties? Dost thou know this, and yet go on unconcerned how thou thalt escape the terrors of that dreadful day? Without thy own care, escape thou canst not: for this judgment is universal; all mankind must stand upon their deliverance; every of must bear his own burden; and every one's burden is more than enough for himself; so that no man ure will be in a condition of affifting another. atal pect any advantage, any atonement then, is mol xper fenfeless. Thou only canst prevent thy own destruction, and this life is the only time of preventing nore Thy holy labours now will turn to good account thy pious mournings move compassion, thy prayer our si Y

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and groans enter the ears of God, and melt him in-to mercy. The meek and patient man will then be confidered for his constant suffering and invincible charity. The grief he now conceives for wrongs, is more for the wickedness and guilt of the person who does them, than for any inconvenience brought upon himself; and this disposition will mitigate his own offence; he heartily forgives, and prays that God would forgive his enemies; and this entitles him to the forgiveness of his own trespasses. more easily provoked to pity, than to anger; and shall be dealt with accordingly, by a God long-suffering, flow to wrath, and sparing when men deserve punishment. He often treats his body with severity and violence, and continues the rigorous discipline, ill the flesh be effectually subdued by the spirit; and therefore good amends shall be made him for these voluntary fufferings, and the neglected pleasures of ense will be liberally recompenced by the abundance of heavenly and intellectual joys. But then, 'tis plain, these good qualities which minister an entrance nto that blifs, must be attained as soon as we can posibly. This present state of mortality is the only cene of action and improvement; and fince this cene so suddenly may change, we are not safe in the lelay of one moment. This is in truth our case. But we are loth to understand it; and so inordinately ond of sensual delights, that we even take a pleaure in imposing upon ourselves; and by the most atal of all madnesses, indulge our appetites at the ftru expence, and extreme hazard of our fouls.

And what is the effect of this, but heaping up nore fewel for everlasting slames to feed upon? For our sins and lusts kindle and blow up those fires;

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and the more heinous and impetuous these are, the fiercer and more furious those will be fure to burn For, as the torments of ungodly wretches shall there be exquisite for their degree, so shall they for their kind and quality be fuited and proportioned to the fins of each particular person; and so contrived, as to be most sensibly afflicting and painful to the respective tempers and complexions of men, the habits they have contracted, and the appetites they have indulged. The lazy and stupid shall be awakened and rouzed into sense, by sharp scourges, and burning The glutton and drunkard gnawed with infatiable hunger, and parched with unquenchable thirst. The nice and delicate, who proposed no happiness here to themselves, but luxury and pleafure, shall then be tormented with what will be much worse than the noisome vapours of flaming pitch, and stinking fulphur. The envious and difcontented shall howl perpetually like mad dogs. The proud and vain-glorious shall be confounded with shame and contempt. The covetous shall pine away with extreme penury and want; and no one via shall escape a torture, exactly fitted to make its indulger the most miserable that it is possible for him to be. In a word, one fingle hour in those disma pains and horrors shall be more insupportable, than whole ages of that uneafiness, which wicked ma here have so irreconcilable an aversion to submit to for mortifying their vanities, and amending their lives

For (which is of all others the last and dreadfullest aggravation) those miseries and tortures will have no end, no refreshment, no intermission. But the sharpest afflictions we endure in this life, will quickly have a period: they have their interval of ease and

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comfort; and those sorrows, which we feel upon a religious account, are largely recompensed with spiritual consolations, and sweet peace of mind. Do not then grudge a little present grief; but mourn earnestly for thy sins, and bend thy utmost thoughts and care to the subduing and reforming them; that this short anxiety may deliver thee from eternal despair, and anguish unconceivable; and those sew tears of repentance, may secure to thee a portion of

everlasting joy with the blessed.

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O happy reverse of all their griefs and fufferings, which the righteous shall find in that day! Then they shall stand full of hope and humble confidence before that judgment-feat from which their haughty and merciless oppressors, confounded with fear, and amazed with guilt, shall strive and wish in vain to hide their trembling heads. Then he, who now stands tamely at the bar of men, and innocently suffers, shall then be advanced to a throne, and placed among the faints and martyrs, to affift at the trial of his, once infulting judges. Then the poor and meek shall have great boldness, while the proud and great finner quake at the presence of God and the lamb. Then that piety and godly fear, that abstinence and fevere virtue, that patient enduring for Christ's sake, which is now thought just matter of derision and contempt, and counted folly and religious madness, shall then be acknowledged by its most latyrical scorners, to be indeed the true, the only wisdom. Then the remembrance of past miseries shall be sweet, and they, whose wicked malice exercised such patience, shall be struck dumb with Then all, who fad remorfe and bitterness of soul. devoted themselves to God and his service, shall be tranf-

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transported with raptures of joy; and all those who to difregarded or despised them, shall weep and lament will Then the afflicted and persecuted shall bless his bit or Then the afflicted and perfecuted shall bless his bitter cup, and feel more refined, more substantial delights from it, than fenfual pleasures, or uninterrupted prosperity could ever bring to the most voluptuous and fortunate. Then the plain dress of the the humble, and fackcloth of the penitent, shall shine too glorious as the fun; and all the gay pomp and glit- ble tering jewels of the proud and gaudy finner shall be the trampled under foot like dung. Then the cottage shall take place of the court, patience appear mone wo eligible than the most boundless and arbitrary power; you the honest obedience of an humble faith, more wise, cal than the nicest cavils of the subtlest wit; and a good conscience more useful learning, than the most elaborate systems of philosophy. Then the contempt nor of riches shall approve itself the greatest treasure; see devout prayer the most delicious entertainment; silence and caution the best conversation. Then good that works shall plead better than the most accurate eloquence; alms prove the most prevailing advocate; felf-denial the most exalted pleasure; and the conquest of ill habits the most glorious triumph.

If then this be (as it most affuredly is) a true representation of that decisive day; if this the different fate and effect of these so very different persons and practices; confider, I conjure thee, the circumstances of those damned: and harden thy felf from this reflection, to endure a little now, when that little will secure thee against enduring infinitely more Make trial of thy felf, and if the flight the difficulties of a religious life feem tedious and tiresome, turn the argument against thy sensual inclination,

who ion, and think how those who fink under these will be able to dwell with exquisite and everlasting orments. Nor is this a trifling needless enquiry, out absolutely necessary, and of mighty moment. For matters are so ordered, that perfect ease can be no man's portion in both worlds. They who chuse of their good things here, cannot have them hereafter inter too; nor shall any man, who indulges sense and glit pleasure upon earth, rejoice and reign with Christ in

be the kingdom of heaven.

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Suppose then, that, from your entrance into the world to this very day, you had enjoyed the utmost your heart could possibly desire, of all which is called happiness; honours, riches, pleasures, withood out check, or stint, or interruption: yet what good ela-would all this do to you, if it should please God just not now to strike you with death? Do not you plainly re; fee, without my profecuting this argument any farther, that all below is vanity and mere nothing, and that the love of God, and a religious life, is the only thing which can stand you in any stead? This will ite; flick by you, when all the rest forsake you. on- is neither destroyed by death, nor afraid of punishment, but triumphs over both; fills the man with re-confidence and joyful expectation at the dreadful ffe-day of judgment; and fets him above all the terrors and difinal apprehensions of hell and its tortures.

But then, this is the peculiar privilege of the ferom vants of God; for how is it possible for the men who practice and delight in wickedness, to think of death and judgment, without fear and perplexity of heart? How should they enjoy quiet, and be easy in ire-their minds, if they think at all what is coming ana- pace upon them? Let then the love of God prevail over

over that of fin. But if thou art not yet perfect enough to be acted by this noble principle, let at least the love of thy felf reclaim thee, and the fear of hell restrain and deter thee from a course, which must end at last in thy utter and inevitable ruin. This, says the scripture, is the beginning of wisdom, Psal, cxi. 10. for he who is proof against the fear of God, cannot persevere in any thing that is good; as having no manner of principle that can save him, no curb upon his mind that can awe, or hold him in, from running headlong to perdition.

CHAP. XXV.

Of zeal in the reformation of our lives.

BE fervent in prayer, serving the Lord, says the apostle. And such indeed it highly concerns every one to be in his fervice. For what is the end we propose, by dedicating ourselves in solemn vows to Christ? Rom. xii. 11. Why do we pretend to renounce the world and its vanities, but that these facred ties may engage our utmost watchfulness and diligence, to conform ourselves to the image of God, by living to him, and like him, and much above the rate of common men? Let not therefore these good resolutions cool upon your hands; but be zealous in piety and virtue. You shall shortly receive an ample recompence for all your holy labours, and fee a happy end of grief, and fear, and hardship. Be content with travel and pain for a very little while, and you shall be sure to find rest, and peace and joy to your fouls. The yoke is easy, and the burden is light, Matt. xi. 28, 30. but the weight of glory is far more exceeding and eternal. Be but you careful to discharge

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rour part, and then you need never doubt God's making good his. Support and encourage yourself with the full affurance of obtaining the crown; but ake heed, that affurance do not arrive at presumption; nor the prospect of bliss, which should excite more active and chearful obedience, become an occision of frictival sloth or security.

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I remember an instance of a person irresolute and wavering in the concerns of his foul, divided between hope and fear, who in his prayers was earnestly inreating, to be affured of his own perseverance; and expressing, how happy he should think himself, could he but be satisfied in this point. Whereupon he was mmediately answer'd from within, supposing you ould be assured of this, how would you proceed then? Do but act now, as you would think yourself obliged o do in that case, and never question your persevering. This comfortable reply fettled his mind; and, instead f indulging any curious enquiries into events, or nxious doubts concerning the fuccess of his endeaours; he instantly applied himself to consider what God expected from him, and to fet about the perormance of that, without more to do. Trust in the Lord, and be doing good, fays the pfalmist; commit by way to him, and he shall bring it to pass, Psal. exxvii. 5, 6.

The great and common obstacle to vigorous virue is the dreadful notion men form to themselves of he difficulties to attain it, and how laborious a thing eligion is. And true it is, exalted piety will cost nany a pungent conslict. But even this consideration may be some encouragement too; when we rightly consider, that the hardship of the undertaking,

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of the fight; and entitle the conqueror to a crown by so much brighter, as the toil and hazard of the conquest he gained was greater. For the more a man subdues himself, and does honour to the divine grace, by rendring it victorious over flesh and blood; the larger measures of that grace he shall obtain from God, and become more exemplary in this world, as

well as happy in another.

There are not, 'tis confess'd, in every man, the same passions, or not the same degrees of them, to master and mortify. But tho' a man, whose affections are vehement, and his disposition by nature or custom more stubborn and averse to virtue, hath more to make his way through: yet if this man's resolutions be sirmer, and his vigor be proportionably greater, he shall be able to advance farther, than others of a quieter temper, and less rebellious passions, if that sedateness at the same time dispose them to ease and inactivity.

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Now in this undertaking, two things there are, of extraordinary moment for promoting it. The first is, to observe the tendencies of one's temper and constitution; and take care to bend nature the contrary way, by keeping aloof off from all those temperations and occasions of sinning, with which we feel ourselves most easily beset, and strongly inclined to comply. The other, to discover our peculiar defects and labour with all our might to attain those virtues

which we chiefly want. I am bal

And as this knowledge of our own frailties and necessities is greatly instrumental to our improvement, so we shall do well to profit by what we see in others

others, and to be particularly concern'd for avoiding and fubduing those habits, which we find most usual and offensive, in them with whom we converse. For the commonness of any itl thing is so far from extenuating the blame of those who copy after it, that it s the direct contrary; and fuch examples should be ook'd upon as marks which discover to us where the rocks and fands lie; fuch as are fet to warn us off, not to invite us in. Indeed a wife and good man will turn examples of all forts to his own advantage. The good he will make his patterns, and strive to equal or excel them. The bad he will by all means woid. Or if by reflection the deformity of his neighbour's actions happen to represent that of his own, he will be fure to do fo no more, and think it a happy occasion, that he is thus grown wifer by the folly of mother. For we often see and judge that in the behaviour of those we converse with, which too near light will not let us discern, or partiality let us condemn, in our own. And this should make us autious, when we remember, that the eyes of thers are as sharp, as critical observers, as severe udges of us, and all we do, as ours can possibly e of them. From this univerfal disposition to oberve and judge, proceeds, no doubt, that pleafing pprobation, or vehement diflike of good and bad xamples. For what indeed gives us a more fenfible atisfaction, than the seeing men in every point agreeble to their character? When they, who call themelves by the name of Christ, and pretend in a pecular manner to be refigned up to him, are eminent in ood works and heavenly dispositions; when they abmit entirely to his yoke, and think nothing too much

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much to do or fuffer in obedience to his will; how engaging, how delightful a fight is this? And again how offensive, how very shocking, when they, who make the same outward profession, shall dishonour and defile it by a scandalous and profligate conversation; and, instead of that severe, that spiritual and heavenly life, to which their very name, and the pattern of their master obliges them, abandon themfelves to all manner of excess, and wallow in the most brutish and detestable pollutions? But, eva where men do not degenerate into all this beaffliness; where cares and business of the world diver and draw them off from better employments, 'in unfeemly to others, and of all confequence to themselves, to neglect their proper concern, and engage their thoughts and time in matters foreign to their main defign.

Spirit therefore yourself up to duty, by the remembrance of your station, who you are, and what you have obliged yourself to be. Bear constantly about you a lively idea of Christ crucified. Consider carefully his life, and let the perfection of that, shame you into the reforming your own: Your own, I fay, whose very baptism represents your profession, which is, to follow the example of our faviour, and to be made like unto him; and yet, after so many years being called a christian, you are still very far from being one, if dying to fin, and living to nighteoufness, as your Jesus died and rose again for you, be that which makes a christian, and distinguishes him from other men. If persons dedicated to piety and virtue, would but with due attention fix their thoughts upon the actions and fufferings of Christ,

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his fingle subject would furnish them with instrutions and motives abundantly sufficient for their purpose. St. Paul, we see, determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified; and this indeed, truly known, is the best, the most useful, and of all the most comprehensive learning.

This fires men with an eager holy zeal, and renders them not only exact, but chearful in their duty; it makes them perform what he commands with diligence, and fuffer all that he ordains with refignation and contentedness. Whereas a negligent and lukewarm christian conspires against himself; his life is one perpetual torment, for want of entire fubmission and fervent love. The trials and afflictions bear hard upon his spirit, and the good he attempts is forced and against the grain. He feels not the support of spiritual comforts; he knows he must not have recourse to worldly ones; or, if he might, hat they will not do his business; and so he is left destintly tute of all. For by transgressing the rules of christian discipline, he hazards the safety of his soul; and by feeking relief in unreasonable liberties, he creates fresh torments to himself; because these cannot fatisfy his conscience, but will be sure to leave some displeasure and bitterness behind them. And who can ever be easy, who is reproached with his own ill conduct, and chuses a remedy worse than the distemper?

To this pattern fet us by Christ himself, it will be of great use to add those of the apostles, and other eminent lights in the church. These will convince 18, what excellencies mere men are capable of; and f we heartily endeavour after their perfections, we

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ought not to distrust God's affistance; but may confidently promise ourselves, that an equal degree of zeal will be supported by an equal measure of grace and strength. Observe then their austerities, their fervent prayers and heavenly meditations; observe servers. the great and happy efficacy of them, in raising those holy persons above the world and its temptations and rendring their conversation all heavenly and dist vine, even whilst upon earth. It were indeed a defirable thing, that we could fo wholly abstract ourfelves from sless and sense, that the praises of God, and
and attendance upon his commands, the contemplation of his glories, and the inessable satisfaction of to devout minds, might be our constant and only employment. And happy should we be, if the inordid dinate cares of life gave no distraction to our thoughts, no interruption to those holy exercises. But these you are joys referved for a future and better state; we me cannot here be so refined, we cannot be excused ga from the incumbrances of the body, and its inseparable frailties and necessities. And therefore the virtual tue proper to our present condition is of another na-ture. Use these worldly comforts we may, but we must not place our happiness in them; live upon them our bodies must, but our souls should relish our God only. Whatever his providence thinks fit for ofe us, we are to receive with meekness and contented to ness; as being well affured, that his wisdom can, poin and his goodness will chuse and ordain what is best in,
In the day of prosperity we may rejoice, but that joy out
must be so tempered with gratitude and moderation, oly
as neither to swell into insolence and pride, nor to
ess, engage our affections in the love of the world. It warr the

on the day of adversity we are to consider, and entertain e of the most calamitous accidents, without murmuring race or discontent. In every change of circumstances, heir our minds must be entirely resigned to God; for he erw sall in all, eternal and unchangeable; perfect and hole happy in himself, absolute and sole Lord of the uni-

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werse; and every creature is, and ought to be, wholly did this disposal.

But tho' he be always the same, and can at any time do what is good in his sight, yet this is by no means our case. Frail, and of short continuance is planur character; and this should excite our diligence, de o work while it is day, because our night cometh on emnorider therefore, you must die; die you know not
ghts, how soon; and be afraid lest that fatal hour overtake here you, before the business of life be finished. Rewe member that the time once yours, can never be so
used gain: the wealth of both the Indies cannot redeem
epaingle opportunity, which you have once let slip;
and therefore lay fast hold on all that offer, and suffer no hour to slide by, without its due improvement.

We Virtue can never be attained without great pains

apon and diligence; and if you cool and linger in the elish pursuit, the moment that you gain not ground, you to for ose it. For the affairs of our souls can never stand ted-tone stay; but, as oft as we favour ourselves in can, point of duty, we decline and fall back again toward best. in, or at least into an indisposition toward goodness: joy out if we cherish our zeal, and constantly excite its tion, toly fires, by a vigorous attendance upon our busior to less, we shall soon feel the comfort of this kindly warmth; and all the difficulties we found or formed

to ourselves, will quickly disappear. God will give more grace to him that uses what he gave formerly and virtue every day will disclose her amiableness and make us more in love with her. Then it is that the wife man's description is experimentally made good to us, that her ways are ways of pleafantness, and all ber paths are peace, Prov. iii. readily acknowledge the attempt, I am now advising to be exceeding laborious and great: no bodily toil to be compared to it; nor any conquest over tempo ral enemies fo hazardous and expensive, as that which we gain upon ourselves, and the adversary of souls But as the difficulty exceeds, fo does the benefit and glory likewife. This field must be entred, and this battle won, or we are lost for ever; and he, who does not inure himself to vanquishing, by subduing less temptations, will never be able to grapple with more violent and trying ones; and infirmities one yielded to, grow infentibly to stubborn habits of vice This is a daily warfare, and we may daily reap the fruits of it. For every night will crown us with fresh lawrels, and the reflection upon a day well fpent, furnish us with joys more pleasing than ten thousand trimmphs. Since therefore every day's behaviour is of fuch mighty consequence, in giving turn to our spiritual affairs, beware lest any pass unprofitably. Watch continually over thy felf, and let not this necessary fervour abate, for want of care to cherish and excite it. Remember that your own falvation is the trust committed to your charge; a trust of importance greater than the whole world; and therefore, whatever becomes of the rest, do you se cure onc. To admonish and reprove your brethren while

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

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while you overlook yourself, is a most preposterous ourse; 'tis neglecting your own province, and inading another man's. You have no right to take he mote out of his eye, till the beam be first cast out of your own, Matt. vii. If then you would escape he censure of hypocrisy, begin at home to reform, and be sure to do that effectually. For the greater solence you are content to put upon your own inlinations, and the forer conflicts you undergo; the nore meritorious is your virtue, and the more abunant will be your reward.



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FESUS CHRIST

The SECOND BOOK.

CHAP. I.

The life of the Spiritual man.



fays our bleffed Lord, Luke xvii. 21
Betake thy felf then entirely to God
love him with all thy heart and all the
foul, and bid a total adieu to the

wretched world, and thou shalt find the quintessend of content, and comfort unspeakable. Learn to de spise these outward vanities, and seek pure and spiritual satisfactions. Place all thy hopes, thy happiness, thy thoughts, in them, and thou shalt see this kingdom spring up and grow within thee. It the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Hole Gloss, Rom. xiv. 17. A joy peculiar to the saint



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n which wicked and worldly-minded men have no part. Christ will approach to those that sly towards him for refuge, meet and embrace them in his arms, and fill them with his heavenly consolations. He knocks, and waits to come in, and only stays till thou hast swept and garnish'd thy soul, and prepar'd an apartment, clean and fit for so pure, so divine an inhabitant. For all his glories shine inward. They are not like the gaudy pomps and glittering outsides of earthly ornaments, but lie deep in the breast of his saints. There is his beauty, there his sweet conversation, there his transcendant comforts, there the abundance of his peace, and the intimacy of his

friendship.

Come, then, believing foul, to work; and employ all thy diligence, to prepare thy heart for thy beloved; that heavenly spouse, who will not disdain this poor and homely manfion, and only asks thy ove and care to make it worthy of him. Hear his own gracious promise, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with bim. Make room then for this bleffed guest; cast out the crowd of worldly cares and defires; admit no partner in thy breast, but reserve thy whole heart for this one inhabitant. This one is enough, for he is more than all the world; and if thou hast him, thou hast riches, and honour, and plenty of every thing that is good. He will be thy master, thy protector, thy counselor, thy agent, thy friend, will take thy cares upon himself, and manage all thy concerns to the best advantage; nor shalt thou need any other affistant, or have occasion to ask relief from men. For why indeed from men, whose power is so short, and their affections

affections so inconstant? They quickly change, and mock the hopes of those that depend upon their kindness; but Christ endureth for ever, and is a fure help in all his fervants extremities. Supposing all the fincerity and zeal for our fervice, that man is capable of; yet still he is but man, mortal and frail, and cannot always have the ability, even when he had most the disposition, to relieve and do us good Since then so little confidence is due to his fuccours, the concern ought not to be great, if he withdraw or deny them; if he oppose and grieve, and labour to do us harm. For this is frequently the case, the effect of a fickle temper, that the very fame persons, who to-day are our dearest friends, to-morrow shall become our bitterest enemies. And they, who now are our most furious adversaries, within a little while come over to our fide. It cannot well be otherwise, in persons so unsettled, so liable to turn with every breath of wind. Place then thy hope and trust in him alone, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, James i. 17. Let him be the only object of thy fear and love. In him thou art fure to find a constant and powerful friend; one who will heartily espouse thy cause, and order matters better than thou thyself, if left to thine own choice, could possibly do. Alas! thou hast here no continuing city, but art a stranger and sojourner, and must expect to find no settlement, till posses'd of, and united to Christ,

Why do thy anxious thoughts look out for ease and a fixed happiness, in a place which is not, cannot be thy rest? Thy conversation ought to be in heaven, for there is thy home; and all things here should be no otherwise regarded, than as refreshments

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nd conveniencies given to support thee in thy journey thither: things in perpetual motion, and fuch as pass away from thee; and things which thou thyself rt paffing away from too, as fast as time and morality can hasten thee. Do not then imagine, that hey can stick by thee, or thou by them; but look ipon them with an eye of indifference, and keep hy foul disengaged from them. For if thou suffer hem to fasten upon thy affections, they will enslave hy mind, and turn to thy eternal ruin. Affert then nd preferve thy native liberty, by raifing thy foul bove this vain world, and fixing thy defires and neditations upon the most high God, Converse with Christ in prayer, and let this be so constant, so ntent, and ardent, as to contract an intimate famiiarity with him.

It may be, his glories and divine excellencies are bjects too refined and lofty for thy contemplations o dwell upon with relish and sensible delight. he hath condescended to thy mean capacity; and, by ecoming man, afflicted man, hath furnished us with natter of meditation, of a fize with our minds, while welling in humanity. Confider then his poverty nd sufferings. And if thou canst not soar up so high as Christ sitting on his throne, behold him hangng on his cross. Take fanctuary in his stripes and younds, and death; those stripes by which the vorld is healed; that death, by which mankind live. and, if these be well attended to, they will admiifter marvellous strength and comfort to thy adverties; enable thee to bear wrongs with eafe, contempt vith patience, calumny and detraction with content, What! was the fon of God a fcorn of men, and an utcast of the people? Was the king of heaven re-

duced to wants and necessities upon earth, and had not so much as where to lay his head? Luke ix. 58. Was he, who loved his enemies fo tenderly as even to die for them, forfaken by his friends? Did Chrift fubmit chearfully to endure, and to be despised? And doft thou, wretched finner, murmur and complain, when poverty or contempt come upon thee? When thy friends defert, or thy enemies flander thee? Did he undergo the malice and contradiction of men, and dost thou hope that all men should favour, and alfift, and speak of thee with honour? Nay, wretched man, entertain not fo vain a hope. It cannot be; it is not fit it should. For couldst thou be exempted ed from injuries and afflictions, what opportunity could there ever be for the exercise of thy patience? If nothing cross should happen in the whole coursed thy life, how couldst thou approve thy friendship and love for Christ? How express thy likeness to him? This, the apostle tells us, is the condition, this the way, that leads to happiness, 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. and they, who defire to reign with Christ, must not think much to fuffer both with him, and for him.

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Oh! had we but, with Thomas, put our fingers in the print of his nails, and thrust our hands into his side, John xx. Had we but acquainted ourselves with his sufferings, by deep and serious considerations; and tasted indeed the astonishing greatness of his love; the joys and miseries of this life would soon become indifferent to us. Or rather, they would no longer be indifferent, but we should even rejoice in tribulation, and triumph in the opposition, and shame, and wrongful dealings of men, which draw us to so much nearer and more lively resemblance of the blessed Jesus. For the love of Christ teaches us

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o despise ourselves; and they, who do so, will bear he reproaches and despisings of others with easiness nd fedateness of temper. A man, whose soul is mited to Christ in fervent love, and who hath freed nimfelf from carnal paffions and worldly follicitudes; his man, I fay, is as it were spiritualiz'd, can have ecourse to God without distraction, lives in a manher by, and within himself; nay, is raised above himself, and enjoys heaven, while yet upon earth. He that hath shook off the falacies and prepossessions of fenfe, that fees and judges things, not after the deceitful measures of common opinion, but by the landard of truth, and their own regenerate nature; he is the wife, the truly learned man, and he is aught this wisdom, not by human methods, but by instructions from above, from God the fountain and perfection of all wisdom.

This man can never want opportunities of both injoying and improving his happiness. The interuptions, which common men lament, cannot affect him. For nothing can take him from himself; and lo long as he hath his own breast to retire into, he cannot be deprived of a fit place, and proper feason, for any holy exercise. If business and the world at my time call him abroad, he always acts and converses there with cautious reserve, and keeps it in his power to recollect and retreat again at pleasure. Bolily labour is no hindrance, for this employs but the east part of him; the cares of life he never lays himelf out upon, but fuits his temper to his present cirumstances, and only studies to keep his mind easy and composed: the unreasonableness, and folly, and naccountable perverseness of other mens humour nd behaviour give him no disturbance, for he is taken

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taken up with his own. In short, every man finds more or less vexation and obstruction in the affairs of his soul, as he engages himself more or less in the world; and as he chuses or refuses to make those

things his care, which are not properly fo.

A man, whose mind is purify'd from the dross of earth, and disposed as it ought to God and heavenly things, will find that every accident of life contributes to his advantage. For the true reason of our passion and disquiet, when things fall out contrary to our expectations or defires, is the want of that refignation and temper, which never fails to compose the spirits of men, mortify'd to themselves and the world, and disengaged from the vanities and false appearances of happiness here below. No thing so infects and defiles, so entangles and perplexes a man's mind, as a fordid love of the crea-But when we can once prevail with ourselve to despise these trifling, these delusive comforts without us, our retirements into our own breasts will be frequent, and free; our joys resulting from them undisturbed; and our contemplations of heaven and heavenly things full of rapture and transport.

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CHAP. II. The advantage of humility.

B E not very follicitous what friends thou half to appear in thy behalf, nor what foes employ their malice in complotting thee difficulty and trouble; but let it be thy great care to keep God thy friend and helper, and be fure to preserve a good confcience; for, so long as thy own heart condemns thee not, God will not fail to plead thy cause, and

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affift and blefs thy righteous undertakings. And those whom he receives into his peculiar protection, no wickedness or spite shall be able to hurt. Suffer thou may'ft indeed, but provided thou learn to fuffer without murmuring and impatience, thou shalt certainly fee the falvation of God. And if this feems to tarry, yet wait for it; for he best knows the proper time of deliverance, and therefore you ought intirely to rest upon his all-wise disposal. Deliver no doubt he will: the relieving men in diffress, and wiping off the shame and reproach of his servants, being acts by which God delights to fignalize his providence. But there is often reason, why the doing it should be deferred; fince the discovery of our failings by other people, and the reproofs we meet with upon their account, have frequently a very happy effect upon our minds, and render them more modest and humble in their own esteem of themselves.

And humility is a virtue of fo general, fo exceeding good influence, that we can scarce purchase it too dear. For he, who is lowly in his own eyes, and fenfible of his own failings, makes no difficulty to acknowledge his offences against his neighbour, and gives all reasonable satisfaction to any who have cause to be angry at him. Nor does this forwardness to reconciliation expose him to the infults of inurious men; for God charges his providence with a peculiar protection of the humble, and delivers fuch as are of a contrite spirit. He condescends to dwell with the humble, and hath engaged to comfort their holy forrows. To these he promises large portions of his grace, and that, they who abase themselves hall afterwards be exalted, Luke xiv. Pfal. xxv. To hese he reveals his secrets, and draws them to him-

felf with the cords of love and kindness. The hum. ble suffers little or no disturbance of mind, but receives the reproaches and affronts of men without any great impression. For he considers, that God, and not the world, is his hope; and if his favour be but secured, the rest cannot be of any very great importance. In thort, this virtue is so necessary, so fundamental a one, that no man ought to effect himself a proficient in goodness, who is not yet atrived to that pitch of it, which teaches him to think himself the least of all faints, and last of all men.

CHAP. III.

The peace-maker.

CECURE peace at home in the first place; and, when thy own breast is thus composed, it will then be proper to reconcile and make peace among thy neighbours. And this indeed is a very worthy and reputable action; it brings greater and juster commendation to a man, and more benefit to those with whom he converses, than wit, or learning, or any of those other so much admired and superficial accomplishments. And as every thing is fet off by its contrary, so here, the mischief of a contentious disposition is unconceivable. For nothing can be is innocent, nothing fo well or kindly meant, but such a man will be fure to fix some ill interpretation upon it: but the good temper will be as careful, on the other hand, to take every thing in the best sense ! is capable of. For a peaceable man is not apt to fuspect ill of any; but the peevish and discontented lista are rack'd and tormented with a thousand jealous furmises, and neither are quiet themselves, nor con-

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ward in faying what they should not; and as backward in doing what they should. Diligent observers of their neighbour's duty, and scandalously negigent of their own. Whereas, in truth, our saviour's rule should always be our measure; for no man is sit to censure or correct his brother, by pulling the mote out of his eye, till he have first exercised a due severity upon himself, by casting the beam out of his ewn eye. And, oh! how happy should we be, how cased of detraction, and calumny, and censoriousness, if none would take upon them to condemn or censure others, till they were first qualified for the authority they usure, by a thorough amendment of their own manners, and being proof against any just

eprehension themselves?

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Who can forbear the observing, how manifestly nequal we are in our dealings? Every one is ingeious at framing Excuses, and making large allownces for what he doth himself; and yet scarce any ody admits the apologies introduced by others in heir own vindication. How much more just and casonable were our proceedings, would we but pass favourable construction upon the actions of others, nd turn the feverity of our censure upon our own? f you wish to be born with, you must first learn bear with your brethren, and exercise the goodature you expect, as oft as occasion offers. For hen are best taught by examples, and the measure ve mete gives us a right to receive the same again, but is this charity? Is this humility? Nothing more listant from it. For these dispose us to condemn, nd be angry with no body but ourselves. To keep

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up a good understanding with men of goodness and temper, is but a very vulgar virtue. This is eat and delightful, for every man naturally defires quit and good usage, and cannot help being well affected to persons who love, and please, and are like him The difficulty is, to carry matters smooth and inoffen fively with men of rugged, intractable, and fiera dispositions! With those who make little conscience of what they do or fay, and stick at nothing unjul or unfair in their dealings. And he who can do this is a truly great foul, and fets a noble and commend able pattern of philosophical, or which is more, if christian fortitude.

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There are a fort of men, who cherish peace and quiet, with themselves and all the world; and and ther very vile fort of wretches, the very reversed these, who love to fish in troubled waters, and at alid neither easy, nor will suffer any body else to be for to constantly troublesome to others, but much mon inc tormenting and vexatious to themselves. And then are yet a third fort, who are not fatisfy'd with giving late no offence, but make it their business to reconcile di others, where it hath been given; and to restor with that peace, which they were never instrumental in ten disturbing. But when all is done, our life here i exposed to continual misery and contention; and the utmost degree of peace we must expect to as rive at, does not confift in being free from injuria and croffes, but in bearing them with humility, and not being provoked to impatience, and uneasy references. And therefore, the more any man had her inured himself to suffer, and the better he entertain re afflictions and wrongs, the more ferene his mind of will of t

vill be. For this person hath gained a conquest over imself, is above the reach of detraction, hath the world at his command, is a friend of Christ, and an heritor of the kingdom of heaven.

CHAP. IV.

Purity and fincerity.

HERE are two wings by which a man foars THERE are two wings by which a man foars above the world, fincerity and purity. The end former regards the intention, the latter the affectie, do ons; that aspires and aims at a likeness to God; this makes us really like him. We should find no hardand hip in any good action, were but our minds free and from all intemperate paffion and defire. And this led perfection of freedom we should not fail to attain, lid we, in all our defigns and undertakings, propose to other ends than obedience to the will of God, and promoting the good of our neighbour. Were there put our minds thus fixed, and our intentions regu-ving ated, every thing would happily contribute to our acide diffication. We should study the volume of nature with profit, and every line in that large books would end to our inftruction. The smallest, and, in common esteem, most despicable creature would represent, as in a glass, the goodness of God to us. And the reason why these things are seen with so unpro-distable speculation, is, because our minds are not and repractical inferences, which most naturally result from hat hem. For, as colours appear to our minds as they tain are painted in the eye, so the judgment men make nind of all outward objects, depends upon the condition will of the mind; and we argue and pronounce of them

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differently, as we happen to be truly or falfely affected before-hand.

If there be fuch a thing as true pleasure in this world, the pure in heart enjoy it. And if there ke a hell upon earth, it dwells in that man's breast, who hath a guilty and polluted conscience. As iron is purged from the rust by fire, and becomes bright and new; fo that zeal, by which we renounce the world, and turn entirely to God, takes off our filth and changes us into new men. The lukewarm and indifferent christian grudges every thing he does ftops at every difficulty, and feeks his satisfaction in worldly and outward comforts. But if he warmly applies himself to subdue his passions, and resolutely attempts the following God in his own way, the hardships which at first discouraged him, grow familiar, and leffen upon his hands. All that God appoints him to do or fuffer, becomes fenfibly to him an easy yoke, and a light burthen, and he finds peace and rest to his soul.

CHAP. V.

18.

Know thyself.

I T is a very usual thing with us, to have a mighty confidence in ourselves; when alas! the want both of abilities and performance reproves our vanity and folly. For how small is the proportion of our gifts, in comparison of our own imaginations relating to them? And how defective our wisdom and care to use and improve even that proportion we have! The light that is in us shines but dimly, and by our neglect we suffer it to go quite out. We are often blind, and not sensible of our infirmities; we stume

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ole and fall, and still pretend we see; commit horible fins; aggravate our guilt by defending what we have done; nay, are fometimes fo wretchedly deluded, as even to endeavour to fanctify our wickedness by a pretence of zeal. The smallest faults of others eldom escape our censure; and the much greater of our own as feldom fall under our observation. The burthens and hardships we put upon them, seem easonable, easy, and light; but the least and most rivial uneafiness they create to us, we have a quick nd painful sense of, and cry out, who can bear it? Whereas, would we but take a right estimate of urselves, and judge our own actions as we ought o do, we should find little leifure, and less provoation, to pronounce feverely concerning our brethren.

Now this is the wife and truly spiritual man's mehod: he employs his thoughts at home, confiders hat there lies his proper business and care; and is ender of other people's failings, from a due and humle consciousness of his own. And whatever fond pinions we may cherish of our own virtue, religius and perfect we are not, nor ever can be, till we xamine our own consciences diligently, and leave Il the rest of the world to stand and fall by the judgnent of their own master. Censoriousness and chritian piety can never inhabit together. For this would vant ring us to a neglect of all things without us, and hake us both forbear and despise all fore-judgings, ut those of God and our own consciences. pind, which does not converse with it self, is an le wanderer, and all the learning in the world is uitless and misemploy'd, whilst in the midst of his often pasted knowledge, a man remains in profound igno-

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rance of that, which in point both of duty and advantage he is most concerned to know. True peace and satisfaction of mind can only be acquired by doing our own business; and friendship and charity are best preserved, by leaving off all impertinent and busy curiosities, concerning the conduct and re-

putation of our neighbours.

The abandoning all worldly care, is a true argument of greater proficience in goodness. For, by esteeming highly of any thing here below, our value for God and heaven is unavoidably diminished and impaired. Let nothing therefore but God, and the things that be of God, seem great or grateful to the worthy defiring, or rejoicing in. And all that imginary comfort, which the creatures pretend to administer, treat with the generous neglect and contempt that it deserves. For a foul entirely devoted to the love of God, will naturally despise every thing in comparison of him. And reason good there why it should do so, when we consider, that even thing else is frail and of short continuance, empty and unfatisfactory; but God alone eternal, omniprefent, infinite in every excellence; and therefore he is the best, he is the only comfort and true joy the foul, who alone can fill and exceed its large defires.

CHAP. VI.

The joy of a good conscience.

HE glory and privilege of a good man confishs in the testimony of his own mind; so this is a perpetual feast, and will terminate in the umph. It sets him above the power of fortune, and

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makes the sharpest afflictions not only an exercise of his invincible patience, but a matter of undifturbed joy to him. Whereas even prosperity it self cannot procure ease and content to a guilty and self-condemning breast. Would'st thou then enjoy a sweet and uninterrupted tranquility? Keep all at peace within, and give thy own thoughts no cause to reproach thee. All the satisfaction we take or promise ourselves, is vain and dangerous, except that only which proceeds from a true fense of having done our luty. The men thou feeft so gay, so feemingly full of delight, are galled and stung within; they have no inward, no true contentment; and notwithstanding their most industrious pursuits of pleasure, that fentence of God is irreversible, and the sad effects of t cleave to their hearts, that there is no peace to the wicked, Isa. lvii. 21. They may perhaps make nighty boasts of their enjoyments, put on an air of happiness, give out, that their pomp and greatness secure them from the assaults of misery; but these are all delusions, and ought not to incline our affent, or provoke our envy. We see not their inward torures; nor are witnesses of those checks and terrors, which make retirement bitter and insupportable, and aunt their closets and their beds: we discern not ret, but there is a time coming when we shall fee n angry God breaking out upon them in fury; their nighty projects quashed and baffled, and all the happiness they vainly boasted of, vanish like a dream.

While therefore these men take a pride in their ucceffes and outward enjoyments, do thou with qual fatisfaction entertain thy afflictions. ot indeed to flesh and blood an easy undertaking; out to a foul filled with grace and love, which knows

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and proposes to it self no other happiness but God, nothing is impracticable, nothing too difficult. For what is this, but to rejoice in the fatherly care and affection of him, whose providence ordereth these fufferings for thy good? The glory which we give or receive from one another, is very fickle and perishing; it cannot last long, and while it does, some alloy of forrows will ever attend and damp it. The good man's glory stands upon stronger foundations; it rifes from within, and must endure so long as that innocence which creates it: nay, it must last as long as God himself; for his will carefully performed, his favour and approbation which follows that performance, are the folid bases on which it stands: and these can never fail, so long as truth and justice continue impregnable. To him who aspires after eternal glory and honour, that of this world is of very little confideration. And these are so very different, so inconfistent, that the love and fincere defires of the one are best proved by a neglect and disesteem of the other. Nay, not only the future, but the present happiness is best secured, by seeking the approbation of God alone; for nothing contributes more to an easy and quiet mind, than a difregard of the praise, and despising the censures and reproaches of bad men.

A pure and quiet conscience does above all things dispose a man to rest contented with his condition: and especially, with regard to the opinion of the world, it is highly reasonable he should do so. For what is any one really the better, or the worse, for what other people say of him? Their commendations add nothing to his virtue, nor does their dispraise and scandal in the least diminish it. The man is still

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the fame; what his own actions and the judgment of God make him. This is the standard of our worth and happiness; neither more nor less belongs to us, han will be found to do fo at the last great account; and that will depend, not upon what we were faid or supposed to be, but upon what in very deed we were in this world. The more respect therefore we bear to the condition of our own minds, the less impresion will the characters and reports of men make upon us. For God feeth not as men fee; they obferve the face and outward appearance, but he fearchth and understands the heart. They look upon the ction, and form a judgment from thence; he sees our intentions, and condemns or acquits us accordng to our honesty and fincerity, or corrupt inclinaions and wicked defigns. And therefore a modest numble man makes it his constant care to be doing good, and to think meanly of his own performances. He feeks, nay, he feels no great matter of comfort, from any of the advantages which attend well-doing n this world; but confiders whom he ferves, and or whose fake he does it, and chearfully relies upon im alone, for the praise and reward of that which est deserves it. And when we are not sollicitously oncerned for the testimony and credit of men, then hay we truly be faid to have refigned ourselves to God, and to depend upon him, with that stedfast and oly confidence which becomes us. Not be that comrendeth himself (no, nor he whom others commend leither) is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth, Cor. x. 18. And therefore a holy and spiritual man ideed, lays aside, as much as may be, all concern with the world. He confiders that God is the only erson whom he should labour to please; and while 0 2

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s still the he is happy in his approbation, and the witness of a good conscience, all outward accidents are considered, as things remote, and foreign to his main design; and such as ought not much to affect him.

CHAP. VII.

Of loving Jesus above all things.

B Lessed is that man indeed, who constantly seels and relishes the love of Jesus; who finds the fweet of this love, and can even despise and hate himself for his faviour's fake. For, tho' the love of ourselves be the very voice of reason and nature, yet the same voice commands us too, to quit a less valuable friend for one that is better. And this exchange he hath made necessary to our obedience, who requires us, to love him only, above all things. And he alone is worthy of our love. For the objects of this world, which are too apt to engage our affections, are uncertain and deceitful; but Christ is faith ful and eternal, and will not fail to return and reward our love. He that depends upon any tempor ral comfort, will one day be convinc'd of its fraily to his cost, when he and it both perish together; but Jesus remaineth for ever. And as he cannot perill himself, so neither will he suffer any to perish, who depend upon him. Let him then be your hope, you joy, your love, whose friendship and whose power are everlasting. Tho' all things forfake you, ya will not he; nay, all things else will certainly for fake you, but even then he will be all, and more than all the world to you,

Living and dying then, keep close and stedfast to him, for he in life and death will be to you advan-

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age. But then his friendship and constant protection depends upon this condition, that you admit no ival in competition with him. He will not accept divided affections, but expects to reign supreme and ole lord of your hearts; and the only way of inviing him thither, is to cast out all other inmates, and et him have the whole house to himself. And indeed, when we come to confider and compute matters justly, whatever love or regard we have allowed to any thing but him, will be found in a manner perfectly lost and thrown away. Do not therefore indulge a paffion, which can turn to no account. Lean not upon a broken reed, which will not only let thee fall, but pierce thy arm too. And fuch a reed is mortal man, for all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof flourisheth as a flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, I Pet. i. 24. And they who are enamour'd with its beauty, find how poor and transitory, how empty and deceitful a good they set their hearts upon. Wherever else we expect comfort, our hopes are foon blafted, or wretchedly disappointed; but when our thoughts and wishes center in Jesus, we are sure to find what we look for, fure to obtain all that we did, more than what we could expect. Think not to find fatisfaction in thy self; for the better you understand yourself, the less cause you will find to love yourself; and the more you indulge this love, the greater and more certain will be your ruin. Seek then thy Lord and only Sa-for viour; for he who hath Christ, possesses every thing worth poffessing; and he who neglects him does himself more mischief than all the enemies, nay, all this world, and all the powers of hell, could ever bring upon him.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of intimate conversation, and friendship with JESUS.

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WHILE Jesus is present by his grace and comfort, nothing is hard to do, nothing grievous to fuffer; but happiness and perfect peace dwell and reign in my breast. But the moment he withdraws his chearing prefence, all my supports are loft and gone, all my faculties disabled, and every difficulty insuperable, every cross insupportable. The usual comforts of this world make no impression, nor give any folid joy, while he continues filent; but let bim speak one single word of consolation to the foul, and she is gay in the midst of distresses, Thus Mary rose immediately, and dried up her tears, upon the news of his approach, and the first call of her dear master. And happy sure was she, happy is every mortal in this vale of tears, whom Jesus effectually calls: for whom he calls and commands to come to him, he calls from grief and mourning to true joy. How flat and infipid, how harsh and unpleafant is all we are, and all we have, without this heavenly comforter? How empty and deluding all those wishes and defires, which are placed upon any other object? They bid us infinitely to our loss. A loss greater and more irretrievable, than if we lost the whole world. For cou'd we gain the whole world with the loss of him, it were a foolish and most miserable exchange. And what indeed is all the world without him? To be deprived of this one friend, is bitterer than the pangs of death: to enjoy and possess him, the only happiness of life. His friendship

friendship is security more than sufficient against a whole world of enemies; a treasure above all the riches of the universe. He who finds this, hath more than both the *Indies*; and he who loses it, loses more than can be express'd. But why do I say more? He loses all: for this is poverty in it's extremity; nay, the only poverty, to lose the only true riches.

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So all-fufficient, fo delightful, so celestially fweet, s the friendship and company of Jesus! But every man is not qualified for fo precious a bleffing, for it equires great care, and skill, and spiritual wisdom, to be fit for this enjoyment. Humility and charity must make and keep him ours. Piety and peace re the dispositions he delights in. Sin, and passion, and worldly affections, will drive him away. And f he take his flight, where, wretched man, where wilt thou find a friend? Without a friend thou canst not enjoy confolation; and if he be not thy only friend, thou art left desolate and forlorn. Consider hen, how miserable thou makest thy self, by plaing thy confidence, or thy joy, in any other. For better were it far, that the whole world should bend heir utmost spight against thee, than this one friend be provoked to displeasure. If therefore relations nd acquaintance be dear, yet let none be so, in competition with thy God and Saviour. Remember, they re dear for his fake, but he for his own. For this s the peculiar prerogative of Christ, that enemies as vell as friends should challenge a share in thy affecions upon his account. Thou art to forgive and ove, to pity and pray for all mankind, because be oves them all; and it ought to be the earnest defire f our hearts, that all may know, and be fensible of his

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his love, and make the most suitable returns human nature is capable of, for such wonderful goodness But neither we nor any other person have a right to be loved for our own selves; for the foundation of love is excellence and goodness; and this is all from God. In him alone it dwells originally, inherently, independently; and what proportion foever any creature hath, is entirely derived from him, the emanation of that universal and inexhaustible source. And therefore he alone hath right to command our low for his own excellence, because all excellence is his: he alone is to be loved above all others, because he neither hath, nor can have any equal. Covet not then the praise or love of men, for praise and love are peculiar to God only. Nor lavishly dispense these to others, but in thy felf, and all persons of virtue and merit, praise, and admire, and love, the graces of Christ.

Bring to thy Lord a clean and upright spirit, free from the fordid affections of this world; that thou may'ft be entirely his, and folace thy felf with the delights of his conversation. But leave the world and come to him, that thou canst not do, without the prevention and affiftance of his grace. This only can exalt thy defires, and draw and fecure thy hear with the cords of divine love. For man can do all things through Christ that strengthens him; but i that fuccour be withdrawn, he is blind and naked destitute and weak, full of confusion and torment; or rather, he is confusion in the abstract, weakness and impotence it felf. And if sometime thou feel an inward fcourge, let not thy melancholy thought deject or drive thee to despair. For spiritual comforts and joys are fown in tears; and patience brings forth

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orth plentiful and perfect fruits of righteousness and peace. If these sorrows proceed from a restection upon thy own sins and infirmities, include an holy grief; and lament, as becomes a serious penitent, thy own unworthiness, and former misery. If adversibles sent from the hand of God afflict thee, support the hand of God afflict thee, support the hand be affured, that suffering so as may advance the master's honour, will end in glory and advancement to the felf. But consider, that, in either case, the rouble cannot be long; for these black intervals of adness will as certainly, as naturally, be followed with inward peace and joy, as summer succeeds winter, and a storm is hushed into a prosound calm.

CHAP. IX.

The disconsolate State.

God vouchsafes to supply their place with piritual and heavenly ones, which are infinitely beter; we are not much to wonder, if the soul preerves its temper, and bears up manfully under such ircumstances. But when the world and God both rown, then to bear such desertion with patience, and be content to be deprived of all our hopes for is glory; then to acknowledge our unworthiness, and not charge God soolishly, nor be partial to our infering selves; this is virtue and resignation indeed, he very excellence and perfection of an humble and abmissive mind. Who that considers, can forbear ejoycing, while the chearful light of God's counterance shines bright about him? What wretch is so inreasonable to grudge his service, when bounty and

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bleffings reward his pains, and convince him that he lig does not ferve God for nought? This is the happy gra feafon, which every man defires and may triump and Smooth and pleasant is his passage, whom the ten grace of God conducts and carries through this ael troublesome world. For who can think it strange the that he should not feel the weight of his burther enc who is strengthen'd and supported by almighty power, effe and led through difficulties and dangers by the cap ing tain of his falvation?

It is natural for us to cling fast about any thing again that may give us ease; and hard for a man to dive mat himself of carnal appetites; so that, before our pal supp fions be effectually subdued, and our delight and those hope fix'd entirely upon God, many and frequent afit conflicts must be undergone. And yet at no expense and less than this, is our peace and quiet to be purchased of old For so long as a man rests upon his own strength thorn he is easily diverted to worldly comforts, and talk support little satisfaction but what arises from such. Buth seeds whose soul is devoted to God and goodness, expect of not his delight from sensual enjoyments, but finds we have pleasure in the severer exercises of virtue and devo the g tion, and even enjoys the hardships he undergoes f is m Christ's fake.

If then God showers down spiritual comforts from the above, entertain the precious gifts with humility a tax. thanks; and lose not the effect and reward of grace confess by supposing it your due, or valuing yourself up impressit. Rejoice in the blessing; but temper that it for with gratitude. Let it not swell to insolence a but you wanted to accompany to a confession of the same of the sam vanity, to censoriousness or contempt of thy weak not find brethren; but the more thou hast received, the great wayer let thy modesty be; and the more thy fear, thy a my.

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ath ligence and watchfulness, that thou misuse not such pappy gracious liberality. For comfort and gladness will not last always; a cloud will come between and inthe terrupt the chearful beams of the fun of righteoufthis ness. Temptations will have their turn too; and ange, therefore, when these fall hard and heavy, let patithen ence and humility, not hopeless despondency, be the owa effect of fuch affaults. The greatness of thy suffercap ings must inflame thy dependance, thy zeal, thy devotion; and fervent prayer is the proper weapon thin gainst the attacks of all spiritual adversaries. divermatters are not desperate. He who took away his r pal supports, only withdraws them for a season, and to t an those who seek them with holy perseverance, will at quen a fit time, restore them again with advantage. This penc is an usual thing with God. The prophets and faints hased of old have all advanced to their crowns, by the same engine thorny way of grief and desertion. Nor may we talk suppose, that these disconsolate intervals are the ef-Buth fects of God's anger and final abdication of us.

Observe how eminent an instance of these changes inds we have in the man after God's own heart. When den the grace and savour of God was listed up upon him, oes fais mind was exalted proportionably: in my prosperity, I said, I shall never be cast down, thou, Lord, s from the goodness, hast made my hill so strong, Psal.
ty a txx. 6. When this favour was withdrawn, he congran confesses the consequence of it, the deep and heavy up impression it made upon his spirits, thou didst turn at it for face from me, and I was troubled, ib. ver. 7. The art yet this trouble, sharp and sensible as it was, did weathout fink him down into despair: his remedy was great Prayer, then cried I unto thee, O Lord, and got me hy my Lord right humbly, ver. 8. And how success-

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ful this application proved, himself declares, the Lord heard me, and had mercy upon me; thou had turned my mourning into dancing, thou hast put of my fackcloth, and girded me with gladness, ver. 10, II. Now, if these forrows were the portion of those bright patterns of piety; if God's dearly beloved children and faithfullest servants have not lived constantly under his propitious smiles; if men of so exalted virtue were yet variously affected, as they fel different dispensations of providence towards them; what are we poor, we weak, defertless wretches that we should expect to be exempted from troubles What is our zeal in comparison of theirs, that we should hope to have it always warm, always on the wing? What have we done to confine the kinds influences of that spirit, and secure them constant to ourselves, which even to those that use and improve it best, goes and comes, and blows only where an when it listeth? John iii. 8. And therefore Job take notice of it, as an event common to all manking that God does not so magnify, or set his heart upon any one among them, but that he vifits him ever morning, and tries bim every moment, Job vii. 17, 18

Where therefore can we fafely place our trust, except in the grace and mercy of God only? All other comforters are miserable. The company and exhortation of religious men, the tender and affecti onate advice of dear and faithful friends, the entertainment of good books, the moving strains of pion eloquence, the heavenly raptures of pfalms and hymns, all these administer but very poor and in perfect relief, to affwage the anguish of our mind or but so much as to divert and deceive our pain; inty God withdraws his confolations, and leaves us total

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to th folate desolate condition of merely human helps. Then, as our last and best refuge, we must fly to God; humble ourselves under his mighty hand; submit to what he lays upon us; acknowledge his goodness even in our afflictions; and be content to fuffer still, so long as he fees fit; for he will not fee fit to continue his displeasure for ever, but will revive the contrite, and exalt the humble in due feafon.

I never yet, to the best of my remembrance, met with any remarkable good man, who had not, at some time or other, fallen into these disquietudes; and languished under the apprehension of God's displeasure, or the abatement of his own zeal. Nor was it ever defigned, that any man in this life should arrive at so exalted a state of holiness, and absolute safety, as not to be fometime tempted. Though this happens at very different times: for some have their trials in the beginning of their conversion, which are referved for others to their latter and more perfect days. It feems, the fublime and rapturous contemplations of God, are a bleffing too precious for those, who have not first endured some trouble of mind, to qualify them for fo excellent a reward. Well then may we rejoice in these temptations, which are ordained as certain forerunners of more abundant grace, and figns of those unspeakable consolations and delights, which are referved for them that have approved themselves faithful. For not to him that is excused from fighting, but to him that overcometh by striving courageoully, and endureth to the end, will I give to eat of the tree of life, Rev. ii. 7.

Most wisely therefore are these changes of prospenity and adversity appointed for the improvement of our piety and virtue. Were our troubles without

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intermission, no slesh could be saved; and therefore God foftens and rewards them with inward and heavenly comforts, that so, affisted by his grace, and encouraged by his favour, we may be able to bear up against our sharpest conflicts. But, were that grace and favour constant too, we should be immoderately exalted with our performances, and impute the bleffings of God too often to our own merit, And therefore the returns of affliction, and spiritual desertion, are convenient, to prevent or check ou pride. They shew us, that how highly soever we may value ourselves, yet we are not so perfect, but that we deserve to suffer; and the good we receive, we receive not of debt, but of bounty and free grace. Mistake not, O man! the devil never sleeps; he always watches for an opportunity to affault, and work thee mischief. The flesh is not utterly dead, nor its appetites and paffions fo totally extinct, but that every fresh object may awaken them into lust, Be thou therefore awake too, and prepare every day for some new conflict: speak not peace to thy self, when befet on every fide with numerous and restless enemies; for wretched is thy case, if their violence be fuffered to bear thee down, or their fubtle and wakeful malice tempt thee to fin.

CHAP. X.

Thankfulness for God's mercies.

MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward mistake Job v. 7. and dost thou refuse the condition own so of nature, by hoping to be exempted from labour admira and fuffering? Consider this, and apply thy self ments strenuously to patience, as a most necessary virtue; sious,

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 119 and learn to bear the cross, as the main business thou art created for. For this will much better become a finful creature, than to depend upon comforts, which thou deservest not, and pleasures which belong not to thee. Could even the worldly-minded be fecure of spiritual joys without interruption, he could not, in agreement with his own principle, but be passionately fond of them, as yielding more substantial fatisfaction, than all external and fenfual delight. For what comparison can there be between those pleasures, which are attended with shame or deceit. and those which are solid and durable, void of reproach and indecency, the fruits of virtue, and the special gift of God to chaste and heavenly souls? This then were Epicurism indeed, were this to be attained and preferved by any the most affiduous application. But that which renders even these joys less sensible, and less eagerly desired, is, that they are the free gift of God, who both dispenses and uft. withdraws them as himself judges proper, and freday quently fuspends the happiness they bring, by strong elf. and fevere trials. For we are in a state of continual tles discipline and warfare, and our conflicts must return nce very thick upon us, fo long as we remain in fuch a and state.

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Nor are these difficulties from the malice of our enemies only, but we ourselves contribute to our own mifery, and hinder the more liberal communications of divine grace and comfort, by affecting a pard mistaken freedom, and extravagant conceits of our tion own strength and goodness. The bounty of God is how admirable, who supports us with the inward enjoyfell ments of his spirit; but the folly of man is proditue: gious, who does not discern, and thankfully acknowand

ledge, that all his power to do well is imparted by higher hand. If then the gifts of heaven are diffributed to us more sparingly than we wish or expect we lessen their proportions, by not being duly qualified to receive them: and qualify'd we cannot be, while ungrateful to the author, and negligent to improve all we receive to the giver's praise and honour. For he who hath and useth grace aright, does by that very act incline God to bestow more. And from the proud unthankful neglecters of the favour, even what they had is taken away, and added to the portion of the humble and diligent; those who are duly fenfible, from whom, and to what purposes,

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If I might be allowed to chuse my own lot, I should think it much more preferable to want my S. spiritual comforts, than to abound in these at the ex with pence of my humility. No, let a penitent and con- high trite spirit always be my portion, and may I ever fo be le be the favourite of heaven, as never to forget that I mean am chief of finners. Knowledge in the fublime in the and glorious mysteries of the christian faith, and revishing contemplations of God and a future state, admi are most desirable advantages; but still I prefer char alone rity which edifieth, I Cor. viii. I. before the higher infole intellectual perfections of that knowledge which pufattain feth up. For every thing which is high, is not plause therefore holy. Many meats are agreeable to the approximation of that knowledge which pufattain palate, which are not conducive to health; and vance those gifts, which are first in our esteem, do not always recommend us most to God. Those spiritual mends advantages are certainly best for us, which increase Recommend our modesty, and awaken our caution, and dispose that o us, to suspect, and deny ourselves, And therefor meane ri-

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it is an argument of wisdom in God, to recal his gifts fometimes; as well as of his goodness, to impart them at others; that by the loss of what we had, we may experimentally find out our own weakness; confess and feel our wants; and know to whom the whole glory of all that is excellent in us, does of right appertain. Deal justly then in this matter; render to God the things that are God's, and take to thy felf what is properly thy own: to him, the thanks for his graces, nay, for the very power of using them aright; to thyself, the shame and condemnation of having used them no better: and know, that his is the honour for all thou hast done well, thine only the blame and just punishment for t, I all thou hast done amiss.

my Sit down in the lowest place, and then shalt thou ex with honour be advanced to the highest; for the higher the building, the deeper must the foundation er to be laid, Luke xiv. The highest in God's esteem are nat! meanest in their own; and their excellence confists ime in the meekness and truth, not in the pomp and In oftentation of piety, which affects to be feen and tate, admir'd. The reposing our hope and trust in God char alone is the most effectual prevention of vanity and the infolence; and afcribing to him all our virtues and puf attainments, is inconfistent with coveting the apnot plause of men. For such persons are concerned to the approve their actions to God only; and labour to adand vance his glory, as the chief and only thing, which at at deserves to be magnified in all that is pious and comitual mendable, in themselves and every good man.

real Receive then a little with due gratitude, and thou spok halt obtain more. The gifts, which others esteem efor meanest and most contemptible, consider as the gifts

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of God, and let this raise their value in thy mind For indeed every thing ought to be esteemed, which is a mark of his favour, who is the supreme Lor of all. Even stripes and punishments from bis hand shouldbe, not only submitted to patiently, but received thankfully; fince his rod is intended for our good and no dispensation of his providence is without in profitable and wife defign. If then thou value the grace of God, and defireft to keep it, be thank ful when he gives; be refigned and patient when he takes away; pray fervently and frequently for the returns of his favour, and let not thy own pride of them negligence provoke him to withdraw it.

CHAP. XI.

Of loving Christ in affliction.

ANY we find posses'd with strong detire M of Christ's heavenly kingdom, and eager reigning with him there; but few, who are in lor and a with his cross, and content to suffer for his sake win hir on earth. The graces and fweet confolations of hefped fpirit allure and draw us, but afflictions drive dvan away from him. When he invites men to fit dom irm at his table, the guests come crowding in apace; bude; at his table, the guests come crowding in apace; unde; if he call us after him into the wilderness, to have and pray with him; he calls in vain, and goes under the tended. The breaking of bread is what all of good, like, but the drinking of his bitter cup we had the shamefully averse to. We read the history of light at life, and peruse his miracles with reverence and to other light, for these were full of mercy and relief wretched men; but when he comes to the trage ad low circumstances of his dolorous passion, and bit able deat

death, we either shut our books, or read the melancholy story with coldness and indifference: loath to persuade ourselves, that in this part be hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps, I Pet. ii. 21. Such was the behaviour, not of the multitudes only, but of his own disciples too, who throng'd into his Hofanna's and his preaching; but when he was apprehended, and treated as a malefactor, all forfook him and fled, Matt. xxi. John xviii. And he fuch is the behaviour of all those christians still, who leve him chearfully, while things go well with them, and magnify his mercy, so long as they taste his goodness, but withdraw when afflictions approach, and if he hide the brightness of his face, fall into wretched dejections and despondency of mind, and are provoked to impatience and murmuring, and grievous complaints.

Methinks we might find motives and engagements, many and powerful, which should unite our souls and affections to the blessed Jesus, from what he is and affections to the bleffed Jesus, from what he is in himself, not from what he is to us; without any respect to our own private interest, and the present advantages we receive from him. This would confirm and root us fast in love, and praise, and gratically beyond the power of outward calamities, or inward anxieties of mind, to shake and divert us, then should we, with these holy men, even think it good, and thank God that we have been in trouble, and though he should slay us, yet should we still design and trust in him.

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And indeed, how can we profess to love him, who we only love ourselves; and pay obedience to his commands not out of regard to his authority and our obligations, nor from a defire to please him, but purely to promote our own worldly interest? For where, among the many millions who profess to be zealous christians, where is the man that would be content to ferve God, as his maker and rightful Lord, had he no expectation of reward from him Nay, who almost is so spiritually refined, as the poverty of spirit recommended and blessed by our Saviour, requires we should be, that is, resigneds to all temporal enjoyments, and well fatisfied to prefevere in our duty, and not to think our master & vere, though he should even totally deprive us of those comforts, which are usually the encourage ments to piety and virtue? This is a temper rare to be met with; fuch a generofity and greatness spirit, as crowns and kingdoms, nay, the who world were wisely given in exchange for. For the is the perfection of love; a virtue so exalted, that a other part of religion is to be named with it. man may bestow all his wealth upon the poor, an be never the better. He may chastise and mortif his flesh and sensual appetite, with all the severite of the most exemplary penitence, and yet this is be a low and little excellence in comparison to the whole duty of a christian. He may attain to highest and clearest knowledge in the mysteries religion, but still he is infinitely short. His virtus may be bright and exemplary, his devotion ferve and conftant, his meditations ravishing and divine all these are valuable gifts; but there is still one cellence behind, more valuable, more necessary the

all the rest; and that is, being able, after having renounced all the world besides, to renounce himself for the fake of his Lord; to devote all he is or can do, fo entirely to his fervice, as to be content with every thing which falls to his lot; to study his will, his pleasure, his glory in all things, and to consult his own in nothing; and when he hath faithfully and diligently perform'd all, which he knew it became, and was expected from him to do, to esteem all this of no confideration, and account that he hath

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Others, questionless, will have quite different notions of him. They will fee and admire, publish and extol his virtues, but still their commendations, tho' never so profuse, never so just, will not have any influence over his judgment, nor tempt him to vary one whit from that opinion, which truth it felf hath directed us to in this case, when ye have done all that is commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants, Luke xvii. He will not think that complaint of the nat m prophet beneath him, I am poor and desolate, Ps. xxv. when yet in truth among mortal men none is more wealthy, none more happy, none greater and more powerful than he, who in a true christian humility, thinks himself most helpless, most impotent, most miserable. In a word, none more honourable in o th God's eyes, than he who is most vile and despicable in his own.

CHAP. XII.

The reasonableness of taking up our cross.

HEN Jesus thus describes the condition of our being owned for his, if any man will be my disciple, let bim deny bimself, and take up bit cross, and follow me, Matt. xvi. the generality of men are apt to cry out with those in the gospel upon another occasion, this is a hard saying, and who can bear it? John vi. But, oh! that such would fe riously consider, how infinitely more terrible and insupportable that sentence will be, which their angry judge shall pronounce in thunder at the last day; and how those ears, which are too foft and tender to bear this, will then be able to endure, a go p cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and Ah! how abfurd, how fenfeless is it not to be valiant in God's cause at present, and chearfully embrace a command, which, though at tended with some short uneafiness now, should ye be welcome to us, because it will give us boldness in the great day of tryal; and, by imposing some short and very tolerable pains, be our security against torments insupportable and everlasting? For when our Lord shall come to judge the world with term ble pomp, the cross shall be displayed, and listed high in heaven. This thing now so much abhorred, fo full of shame, shall then be a banner of triumph; and they who have fought under it here, and followed the crucified captain of their falvation, in 1 life of humility and fufferings, shall fly to it as ther proper standard, and enter with their glorious leader into

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from which Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 127 into his joy and kingdom, there to be happy for ever.

Why should we then stumble at that cross, which leads directly to a crown? Why thus obstruct our own happiness, by refusing that which heals our spinitual infirmities, guards us against our worst enemies, fills us with heavenly comforts, brightens our virtues, and supports us with assured hopes of inexpressible and everlasting bliss? Remember thy great master and example, bearing his cross, dying upon his cross, that thou hereafter mightest not distain to bear it for thine own advantage, when he for thy sake hath born it before thee. For if we dye with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; but if we deny him, and are ashamed of this punishment, he will also deny and be ashamed of us, 2 Tim. ii. Mark viii.

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Confider that thy all depends upon fuffering and dying. This is the fum of thy duty, this the fountain of thy happiness. God hath ordained no other way of bringing us to himself, except that one of tying daily; and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. In this all the dispensations of providence conspire; for, what course soever you take, which way foever you turn, how prudently foever you contrive, the cross is sure to meet you every where. And that which, willingly embraced, would prove your fafety and virtue, is fure to be your portion, whether you will or not. Bodily fickness and pain, disappointments and worldly losses, anguish and perplexity of heart, discomfort and desertions from God, injuries and provocations from men, and which is worse than all, displeasure and discontent

at yourself; one or more of these will be perpetually exercifing your patience; and fo long as God fees fit to continue you in this state of mortality and discipline, 'tis vain to hope you shall be exempted from them.

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For God, in his great wisdom and goodness, appoints us to tribulation; and clouds, or withdraw our present comforts, that we may learn to love and value him and heaven the more, to acknowledge our dependance upon his bounty, be made fenfible of ou lefu own weakness, and grow wifer and more humble by afflictions. By these we are taught to understand and value the fufferings of Christ, of which we acqui should have but a very cold and imperfect idea, di not our own experience teach us what it is to suffer rife And the greater conformity to his image our tryal glary work us up to, the clearer and more affecting fent A we have of his miraculous condescension. Avoid the left. cross then we cannot, because we cannot run away presi from ourselves, nor cease to be men; and therefor ther. what we cannot avoid, we must make it our ender nued vour patiently to endure, and render that which lengt would otherwise be our torment, a means of virtue to tr here, and of glory hereafter.

Now this is still in our own power: for they who nothing fustain their cross, shall likewise be sustained by in an in return, and all their pains amply rewarded in the co their proper time and place. But this life is not the certain time and place; and therefore we must be content a lity labour now, and expect our recompence hereaster posed. But if we bear with murmuring and grudging, who he bo we must bear, we do but gall our shoulders with the may yoke, and render that a heavy unprofitable low ful to which might be fruitful and glorious. If we cast a time Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

the burthen, we are forthwith purfued and oppressed by another; and, instead of affliction, full of hope and humility, draw upon ourselves that most

intolerable of all burthens; guilt and despair.

Why should you entertain an imagination so vain, is that of being made an exception to all mankind? Produce me; if you can; one fingle instance in the whole catalogue of glorified faints, who passed this rale of tears without his portion of misery. Even our Jefus Christ himself, our great Lord; tho' God as well as man, yet lived a life of trouble; and none was ever so truly a man of sorrows, or so intimately acquainted with grief, Isalah liii. Himself hath told us, that it behoved him thus to suffer, and to rise again the third day, and so to enter into his ryal glory, Luke xxiv.

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fente And if this was the way necessary for Christ himthe left to ascend to the Throne of God, we must not away presume to hope for a smooth and easy passage thiefor ther. His whole life was little else but one continder med cross, a chain of sufferings drawn out to the length of so many years. And do we, who profess to tread in his steps, expect a life of softness and tale, and pleasure? No, no, fond man! look for who nothing but trouble. This thou may'st depend upby i on, for it will never disappoint thee. It is not only
ed in the condition of thy happiness as a christian, but thy
certain settlement and portion as a man. For morent in ality is beset on every side with crosses, and excasta posed to suffering every moment. And though these
who be both the punishment and the remedy for sin, yet
that may we not improve that they who are most carethe may we not imagine that they, who are most care-loss ful to preserve themselves from sinning, are in the after some proportion excused from suffering. For frequently the best men undergo the severest Tryal and the better they are, the tenderer and more pair ful fense they have of them. For the fervent low and defire of a better country, their proper and eter hal home, renders the present pilgrimage and banille

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But yet these calamities are no just reflection up on the wisdom and goodness of almighty God; for as he appoints the rod in his mercy, so does he like wife furnish his fervants with suitable consolation and supports, proportioned to their circumstance And they, who fubmit to the cross as becomes then reap large and glorious fruits by fowing in tear The Burthen of their miseries is lightned, by call ing their care, and reposing their trust, upon on who hath a tender care for them. And the mo the outward man is weaken'd and oppress'd, to man greater strength and grace they feel in the inner man Nay, fuch is their defire, fuch the fatisfaction pend being conformed to the image of Christ, that go aqu men frequently would not fo much as wish to bottra freed from those miseries, in which the less discer to the world are apt to think the very a scar fremity of unhappiness consists. For these bett frens

men we cannot but refuse, and have violent aversions to, as christians we contentedly embrace, and

are entirely fatisfied with.

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When therefore we feel in ourselves, or observe in others, a zeal so powerful, so noble, as not only to bear, but even to love and delight in the cross; when we conquer and bring into absolute subjection these bodies, and their appetites, by a long painful like course of rigorous and voluntary severities; when tion we industriously avoid honours and wealth, bear innce juries and infamy contentedly, despise ourselves, and hem even delight to be despised by others; when we enterrain the sharpest misfortunes with constancy and call temper, and are so perfectly dead to the world, as mor advantages, which recommend and sweeten life to mankind; do not suppose that this is the work, or man falls within the compass of man; for they who deaquisite philosophy, can never rise so high, nor thus to babstract their minds from mere matter and sense. So principle, but that of holy trust and faith in God, by a scapable of acquiring such divine operations. This bette frength and resolution comes from heaven. No do force less than almighty can beat down the flesh, the world, and the devil under our feet; none deseat en and fet us above the horrors and affaults of his ma-

de and temptations; less than his, who vanquish'd his old serpent upon the cross, and by so doing, anchised our cross to us too.

Call up then all thy powers of reason and religion; temember whom thou hast engaged to sollow, and high high hedience, set thy self manfully to take up his cross, who

who submitted to die upon a cross for thy salvation is Prepare and dispose thy heart, that no affliction may to over-bear thee by furprize; but, confidering what pr infinite variety of troubles incompass thee, and war thee every where, let none have the advantage of ca finding thee unprovided: were there a possibility of the efcaping, we might then be allowed to contrive me to thods of declining our miferies: but fince they can no not be shifted off, the only remedy we have let pa against them, is readiness to suffer. Consider it i for thy Lord's Cup, and that he drank the very bittered mi dregs of it; remember it is he who gives it; and that he therefore gives it, that thou may'ft be par bra taker of his sufferings, in order to be made a mor inf worthy partaker of his glories. 'Tis true, he we fin strengthened in his agonies by an angel, sent from and above, nor shalt thou want supports proper for the it, what measures fit to be imparted, our Lord himse wo knows best; and to his wife disposal we must whole to leave it. But all we have to do ourselves, is to secur this in humble and patient disposition. And this in the should find less difficulty in, would we but follow con the pattern our Saviour hath left, of enduring the felf, cross, and despising the Skame, for the glory set be be n fore him, Heb. xii. And what can recommend a you tuffering, what confirm our patience more, than yet consider, that these light afflictions, which are hand jor a moment, shall work out for us a far more of more ceeding and eternal weight of glory? That glory, love, comparison of which they are not worthy so much as to be named. A glory so exceeding, that if the tribulations incident to all mankind were hear upon one single person; yet even so the recompensation. is infinitely above what fuch a fuffering could pretend to deferve; and heaven would be cheap and

prudently bought, even at this vast expence.

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Esteem thy self then happy indeed, when thou canst enjoy thy forrows, and find a sensible satisfaction in fuffering for Christ; for this is in a manner to attain heaven upon earth. A happiness, which no man can ever arrive at, so long as adversities bring pain, and discontent, and sad oppressions of spirit; for the folicitude, and constant labour to avoid calamities, will be fure to produce perpetual disquietude.

Suffering and dying are not only necessary incumbrances upon us, but the best and most authentick instances of our virtue and obedience. It is the bufinets and perfection of a christian to do thus daily; and they, who in good earnest apply themselves to from or the it, will quickly find their affections raised, their or i strength increased, their comfort and inward peace wonderfully advanced. St. Paul was wrapt up insecur this, as of his afflictions, 2 Cgr. xii. And wherein is the uncommon privileges of this especial favourite follow confisted, we learn from the mouth of Christ him-ng to felf, when he fays, I will show him how great things et be be must suffer for my name's sake. Suppose then, nd or you could be admitted to his extasses and revelations, hant yet even these, 'tis plain from his example, would re hant exempt you from trouble and sufferings; for the re o more you are loved, and the more vehemently you ory, love, and are defirous to please your Saviour, the must greater proofs of this kind you must expect to give.

if: Consider those apostles, who went away from their persecutors, rejoicing that they were accounted upon the portby to suffer for the sake of Christ, Acts v. And

learn

learn from thence to covet and value the honour and dignity of enduring pain and poverty, perfecution and reproach. For this would feem no mean pro motion, but a favour referved for those whom Go is kindest to; did we but look back upon the gain it brings to ourselves, the glory to our maker, the joy to faints and angels, and the benefit to or brethren, who shall observe, and be encouraged by our stedfastness, and patience, and holy perseve rance. Nay, even the wicked and carnal mindel will be moved by fuch examples. For there is in lar, manifest a coherence and decency, in submitting to the manifest a coherence and decency, in submitting to any adversities which it shall please God to lay upon us, that even they who have not the heart to imtate, yet will not be able to forbear applauding and

admiring the pattern we fet them.

Would we indeed weigh things in a just balance 'tis very unreasonable we should decline suffering to Christ, when it is so very apparent, that we are we content to undergo much severer hardships for the world, than any he thinks fit to call us to. And shall humour, or passion, or temporal interest be suffered to prevail upon us more powerfully than duty? Ein cially, when that duty promotes an infinitely better interest; and the more we are mortified to ourselve and the world, the nobler advances we make toward God and life everlasting? These are refined privileged for which no man is qualify'd till he be first purific in the furnace of adversity; nor can spiritual and vine graces dwell in a foul, till the drofs of earth and sensual appetites be first purged off. Assur your felf, that fuffering for, and in obedience in Christ, is not only the most acceptable thing to God but really advantageous for your felf, and that which

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Of the Imitation of Jesus Christ. tontributes most to the foul's health of any thing that can happen in the present state. And, would the prejudices flesh and blood lie under, suffer us to discern and consider matters impartially; this would be first in our wishes, and preferred before all the outward prosperity, or inward satisfactions, ou this world can give. For who would not be ambitions of refembling our Lord, and his most eminent faints? Who is fo blind, as not to fee, that the thing; in which they distinguish'd their merit, was not the larger degree of their revelations, or the pleasures they enjoy'd, but the number and extremity of their ng to afflictions? And we may be very certain, that if upor Christ had known any better way to heaven, than by crosses and patience, he would both have chosen it himself, and recommended it to his faithfullest fervants, and dearest friends. But fince his own example, and his constant directions declare, that if any man will come to bim, be must deny bimself, and take up bis cross, and follow him, Luke xiv. it is but folly that and loft labour to think of any other method. For fferd laying afide all human evafions, this will be the fum Espe and conclusion of the whole matter, that, thro' much bette tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God;

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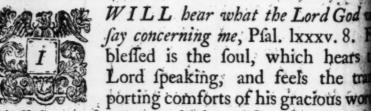
The THIRD BOOK.

Digested into Conferences between CHRIS and the soul of his disciple.

CHAP. I.

The happiness of such a conversation:

DISCIPLE.



Bleffed are the ears, which, with ardent attention drink in the foft and gentle whispers of his spin



and continue obstinately deaf to the treacherous in muations of this deluding world. And doubly be



ied in the of in the of in the of in the or inference of the original of the origi

ed are they, who hear the found of truth, not only in the outward administrations of the word, but by the inward and familiar communications and motions of infused grace. Blessed those eyes, which are shut to all the alluring objects of the world, and constantly wakeful and open to the affairs of the soul, and urned inward upon one's self. Blessed are they whose sharper sight enters deep, and pierces into the acret and sublime mysteries of heavenly truth; purished and prepared by spiritual meditations, and daily exercise of holy duties. Blessed indeed are they, who disengage themselves from all worldly incumbrances, and thereby gain leisure and opportunities to attending continually upon God alone.

consider this, my soul, and shake off sensual demes, which must be first abandoned, before thou
and listen with due reverence and attention to those
lings, which the Lord thy God will speak. And,
what comfortable words are those, I am thy
mace, thy life, thy salvation, and exceeding great
mard, John xiv. Gen. xvii. Come unto me, thou
let art weary and heavy laden, and thou shalt sind
of unto thy soul, Matt. xi. Set thy affections on
lings above, and not on things on the earth, Coloss, iii.
In the things that are seen are temporal, but the
lings that are not seen are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. What
he all things here below, but dangerous and empry
dusions? And what could it profit a man to gain,
lough it were all the creatures, if he be forsaken
and cast off by the creator? In him alone is pleame, and Joy, and Glory. Therefore abandon those
leating shadows, and embrace the only substantial
and; bid a final adieu to the deceits of the world,
and place all thy love and endeavours upon thy God;

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for in his service and acceptance thou shalt attain the end of thy desires, the fruit of thy labours, solid satisfaction and true happiness.

CHAP. II.

God is in the small still voice.

DISCIPLE.

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CPEAK, Lord, for thy servant heareth, I Sam. iii Behold, I am thy fervant, and the fon of thy bandmaid; O give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments, Pfal. cxix. Incline my foul to the words of thy mouth, which drop down as the rain upon the tender berb, and distil gently, like de upon the grass, Deut. xxxii. The Israelites indeed befought Moses heretofore, Speak thou unto us, and we will hear, but let not God speak unto us, lest w die, Exod. xx. 19. But let it not be done unto me, my God, I rather chuse to make my humble petition in the prophet Samuel's form; Speak, Lord, for thy fervant heareth. Let not Moses, nor any of the prophets be my only instructor, but do thou the felf also vouchsafe to teach me by thy self. For thou art the fountain of all their light and know ledge. They could not utter truth without thy in fpiration and heavenly direction; but thou art fential wisdom and truth, and canst communication thy felf effectually to my foul.

Their words, alas, were air and empty found when not inspired by thee, but thine alone are in rit and life. Their expressions may be proper, the arguments moving, but unless thou break filence my soul will still continue deaf and insensible They deliver the words, but thou art the interpretation.

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ter, and lettest me into the true and hidden sense of their most abstruse oracles. Their books are fealed, and only thy hand can open and explain them. From them we receive the command, but only from thee the disposition to obey, and the whole power of performing it. They shew the way, but thou impartest strength to walk therein; all they can do, is still remote and without us. Thou only entrest into the foul, and, by a fecret conveyance, putt'st truth in the inward parts. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, I Cor. iii. but except thou be pleased to give the increase, the word will return unto thee void, and accomplish no part of the end, whereto thou sentest it. The voice of their cry pierces our ears; but the knowing what they cry, and the impression upon our hearts, is thy peculiar gift.

Therefore, I cannot but again supplicate thy grace and mercy, and beg, that Moses may not speak to me, but thou, my Lord, my God, the only and eternal truth, lest I die; not by the terrors of thy thundring voice, but by the effectual communications of thy will. For if I be instructed and admonished by the outward ministration only, and be not inwardly disposed, and zealously affected to obedience, the advantages of instruction will but aggravate my condemnation. For this is the dreadful consequence of the word preached not profiting, when it is not mixed with faith in them that hear it, Heb. iv, And mixed with faith thou knowest it cannot be, except seconded and enforced by the voice of thy spirit; unless thou incline me to love the good I know, and enable me faithfully to fulfil the doctrine I believe. speak therefore, Lord, I say again; to thee thy ser-

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vant listens gladly, for thou hast the words of eterna I life, John iv. Speak powerfully to my soul, and are carry the saving truths home to my conscience and life affections; that thy words may bring comfort and peace, reformation and holiness to thy attentive services, and to thy self immortal honour and praise.

CHAP. III.

Of the general disregard to God's word, and the obedience due to it.

CHRIST.

CINCE then, my fon, thou fo paffionately de niv of firest to hear my voice, incline now thine easy to my words. Words, which well deserve, and will be abundantly reward thy most diligent attention; for m they are sweet and attractive, far above all the energaging arts of human eloquence; useful and instructive, beyond the most laboured systems of philosome phy. The wisdom of this world could not invent in or order, nor can it comprehend them. The my differious truths they declare are too strong for humanic fense to comprehend; nor canst thou enter into their my fecrets, till guided by that light from whence the er flow. My precepts are pure and spiritual, such as too carnal and impure heart can find no relish in. My me every word is of weight; and spoken, not to enter life tain the curious, and please sensual ears, but to sub hic due the heart, and command a Arich obedience ob Hear therefore, but hear as becomes thee, with respectful filence, and entire fubmission; with pro- so found and awful humility; with an earnest desire with be taught; and sincere and vigorous resolutions of A tion doing afterwards as thou art taught. Disciple.] heers . war. to it.

ternal Disciple.] I own the transcendant favour, and and artily acknowledge, with thy holy prophet, that and effed is the man whom thou chasteness, O Lord, and and achest him in thy law; that thou mayest give him e ser-rength in time of adversity, lest he fall away with

iple.]

Christ.] That prophet spoke what I inspired, and did all those holy men of old; for they were all the my fending. Nor is my care at all abated now, the effects of it may be less visible. For I, who hight them then, continue teaching still; proposing niverfal falvation, tho the terms thereof are not y de inversally regarded. For there are many deaf to ear my charms; and therefore deaf, because they d will bo their ears; bate my instructions, and will none ; for my reproofs. They liften to the world much rae enter than to God, and are more disposed to obey structur own corrupt and sensual appetites, than his iloso we and heavenly will. The world invites them e my ad they greedily engage in its service; I covenant uman reternal and excellent rewards; and the insensible their retches will not confider, or think them worth they air acceptance. This folly is universal; for who has a mong the sons of men, expresses half that zeal and My mestness, that solicitous defire to please, and dutienter- fear to offend, in his deportment towards me, sub tich he does in matters relating to this world, or ience obedience to masters upon earth? Consider this, h red blush for shame! for what, but shame and conpro- fion of face, can be the effect of thy reflection upfire to this unworthy usage, this most absurd folly? ons of A small preferment is esteemed a valuable considetion for long and painful journeys. Men fly for

it eagerly, and hasten all they can to get ground a their competitors; this is every one's care, and it is accounted a reproach to be negligent in such put such and happiness is offer'd, they are slothful and unactive, and scarce a man is to be found, who thinks it worth while to mend his pace, or sets one step for an advantage. A little fordid gain engages most me set industry; a trisling sum embroils them in tedio to expensive suits, and irreconcilable hatreds; and put mises of things scarce worth their having, they are and the sleep of their nights, and think their is and care well paid, if they can compass them at his But a substantial and unchangeable good, a recongent pence greater than they knew how to value just and immortal glory, and the honours of the saints, sity, sunk so low in wretched mens esteem, that the lastice pains and hardship are thought too much to acquisite them.

And art thou not ashamed, lazy, insensible, moday muring wretch! that the children of this would should pursue death and ruin, with a more vigor miting industry and zeal, than thou canst find in thy he main to bestow upon immortal life and happiness? So them toys and vanities win more upon their affects their than solid and true good can upon thine? Nay, a magast those vanities, whose very enjoyments are emptheir do often mock their hopes, and are never enjoy that at all: their friends promise and deceive; they make bour, but cannot attain: but my promises are wind a out repentance; none taxeth me with breach sim is faith, or can complain, that his dependance up

and d nd it my word hath at any time disappointed him. For h pur I require only love and perseverance; and, if these deter are not wanting, I answer to the full, nay, I far exuna ceed, my fervants largest wishes and longing expecinks itations. Yet false and fickle men can easily revolt, ep for and the God, who cannot lye, calls and promises in ious vain! I am the fure rewarder of all that diligently t me feek me; and if fuch meet with fufferings and sharp tedia temptations, these are not marks of my displeasure, and po but wisely order'd, and kindly intended, to prove they athe sincerity of my servants zeal, and to illustrate ir day their virtues.

eir to Write then my words in thy heart; engrave them at lat in deep and lasting characters; ponder them diliprecongently, for thou shalt find them a seasonable relief just and necessary support in the day of tryal and advertist, thy. What reading only hath not taught thee, as the lastiction will interpret and make plain. For I do not acqualways visit my chosen alike. Sometimes the comforts of my grace are proper; at others, the with-e, m drawing those comforts, and bringing their patience s wo and constancy to the touch-stone, by outward calavigon mities, and inward anguish of spirit. Thus I daily

ny he rain them up in goodness, by chastising and making a second heir advancement in virtue. The one dispensation ay, a mgages their love of me, the other speedily abates emptheir fondness for the world. But lost and wretched enjoys that stupid creature, upon whom these methods they make no just impression; for he that rejecteth me, re wi and receiveth not my words, bath one that judgeth each him in the last day.

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CHAP. IV.

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A prayer for beavenly instruction and devotion.

DISCIPLE.

LORD, my God, thou art my all, m only good, but who, alas! am I, that I show the take upon me to speak to so great, so glorious a me nel jesty? Poor sinful dust and ashes; a wretched worm in less than the least of all thy servants; much les fet much viler, and more despicable, than I dare bet think, or am able to express or conceive. And the very vileness, Lord, I beg thou wouldst in men remember, that so my helpless desolate condition Wa may move thy tender pity, to a miserable creatur who neither is, nor hath, nor can do any thin without thee. For thou only art good, and how and powerful; and that of power so immense, mercy so diffusive, that thou fillest all things with a goodness; and none but those guilty souls, who refute to partake of thy grace, are shut out from its king over the state of the grace. to partake of thy grace, are shut out from its kind influences. Behold me then hungring and thirst be the after thy righteousness, and let not me be sent empty and are the control of the away. Call up thy bowels, and remember thy control and passions and old loving-kindnesses; and fill my so hall with thy grace and heavenly dispositions, that ment may be a dwelling fit to entertain that bleffed inh bitant, who will not take up his abode in delle D me n and unfanctified places.

But how can I furnish a house for my Lord, a hou, cept he will vouchfafe to affift and supply my want here; How can I sustain the miseries and temptations of refer troublesome dangerous world, except thou gracion ngood interpose and support my weakness? Turn not the uniterpose and support my weakness?

thy face away from me; neither delay thy fatherly are; for if thou grant not refreshing dews, and water not my heart with thy grace, it will remain a dry and barren ground: Teach me, dear God, to know and do thy will; and with fincere humility, and unwearied zeal, enable me to persevere in my obedihow ence. For thou art my wisdom, and my righteousa me ness; my infirmities are not hid from thee; thou mowest me perfectly, and understoodest all my des h le fects, not only before I was born, but even long are thefore this world it felf was made.

CHAP. V.

iditio Walk humbly with thy God, and worship him in truth.

CHRIST.

thing DO, indeed, my fon, know thy frailties, and thy dangers, but let not these discourage thy enith deavours. Seek and love the truth, and let thy
ires the right with me, and all shall center in thy
is knowed a structure of the structure o want mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to break the more earnestly to instruct, and direct mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to break the first mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to break the size of meses of the mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to break the size of meses of the mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to break the size of meses of the mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to break the size of meses of the ins of referve and protect me; to break the fnares of the record and protect me; to break the fnares of the record and and establish of the record the unto the end; to purify me from all corrupt and inordinate

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inordinate affections, that my own happy experience may convince me of what I already believe, and ren-

der thy service perfect freedom.

Christ.] My children cannot be more zealously disposed to ask these bleffings, than I am readily disposed and pleased to grant them. Here therefore the truth, and how thou mayest recommend thy felf to my everlasting favour and acceptance, Reflect with fad remorfe upon thy past offences; let the remembrance of these render thee vile in the own eyes; and take heed, that no confidence in the best actions swell thee with dangerous conceits of thy own deferts. For fure it is, thou art a finner, laden with guilt and many grievous infirmities; prone in thy own nature to vanity, eafily feduced, quickly diverted from good resolutions, and soon overcome by very flight temptations. In fhort, no excellence belongs to thee, which can in any degree justify thy pride or oftentation; but infinite occasions there are to exercise thy humility and lamentation, infinitely more in truth, than thou canst be duly sensible of.

Let not then the mistaken value of any thing thou art, or doeft, delude thee with false appearances of felf worth and perfection; let not thy affect ons be feduced to follow vain and wretched objects or think any advantage can deferve thy praise of admiration, thy love and pains; except such only as are certain and eternal. Let truth be thy chie delight, for this is unchangeable; let thy own un worthiness be the chief object of thy hatred an contempt, for this is the vilest, the justest thing upon which thou can'ft vent displeasure. Fear an decline no calamity, comparably to fin. For no losse me no worldly disappointments or disasters can have their

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dismal consequences, as the loss of a good conscience and God's favour, by transgressing his righteous commandments,

Some men are more concerned for fubtilty of knowledge in religion, than for an humble and finere obedience. They are acted by a spirit of pride and curiofity, and affect to penetrate the mysteries of faith; and value themselves much more for being ble learnedly to dispute for truth, than for adorning t by their lives, and rendring that knowledge efectual to falvation. These men generally fall into langerous snares. I set my face against their arrorance, and fuffer them to perish thro' the vanity of

heir own imaginations.

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But do thou employ thy mind upon other kind of nquiries, and account it greater wisdom to get a erfect knowledge of thy own works, than those of lmighty God. His ways are unsearchable, and past nding out, Rom. xi. but thy own are necessary to e scrutinously examined. And the consideration of he evil thou hast done, and the good thou hast left ndone, will turn to better account, than thy elaorate speculations, concerning the divine nature and ounsels. Some place their religion in images, some geds a good books, some place their religion in images, some jeds a good books, some in an outward shew and pomp of devotion, measuring their piety by the number the prayers they repeat, the sermons they hear, the meals they abstain from: others honour me ith their lips, and talk samiliarly of me, whose earts I am as utter a stranger to, as their allowing thing to no place in their thoughts and affections can make the mean of true spiritual wisdom, and inward purity; are their desires and conversation are in heaven, and earth-

ly entertainments are no longer welcome to them; wi they even grudge those hours, which the necessary my cares for supporting these bodies cut off from the greater concerns of their fouls. And these are the men, that lend a willing ear, and bring a temper and truly tractable to the inftructions of my spirit: in por them he reigns and triumphs. For, having overcome the corrupt inclinations of flesh, and inspired by them with a true christian bravery of foul, they alve contemn the treacherous vanities of this world, and life lay out all their love and labour upon the joys of orre that better world, which, till God thinks fit to admit them into it, they endeavour to anticipate, by keeping their minds night and day intent upon it.

CHAP. VI.

The power of the love of God.

DISCIPLE.

LAUD and magnify thy glorious name, father of heaven, father of our Lord Jest Christ, for all the goodness and tender compassion igore with which thou hast been pleased to remember an term relieve my misery. For unto thy loving kindne f att alone, O father of mercies, and God of all confever lation, are owing all the supports, with which the point of thy unworthy servant hath been at any time name refreshed in the midst of my troubles. And ther section fore to thee alone be the praise. To thee, O fathe ay n with thy only begotten fon, and the bleffed spill, we the comforter, will I render praise, honour, a refect thanksgiving for evermore. Descend then, bless aven God, into that soul, for which thou hast expressivers so great a tenderness, and let thy presence fill it all I

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. vith gladness: for thou art my health, my joy and ny glory, my hope and my refuge in the day of

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I must confess with sorrow that my love is weak, nd my virtue imperfect; nor can the one be suported without thy grace, or the other be cherished, nless thou illuminate my soul, and revive me with hy heavenly comforts. O visit me then with thy alvation, and make me to improve under thy holy iscipline. Deliver and purify my heart from all orrupt affections, and irregular passions; heal my piritual diseases, and take away that dross and filth, which obstruct my purer delights of divine love, iscompose my patience, and shake my resolutions

f perseverance.

For love is great and powerful, an excellent virue, and a laudable exciter to good actions. It ghtens the heaviest burthens, makes difficulties easy, nd smooths the rugged ways of duty; takes out the e, ditterness of sufferings, and gives them a delightful elish. This is the principle, which fires us with a igorous and active zeal, inspires brave and noble tempts, and spurs us on with an impatient desire dne f attaining higher degrees of perfection. For love ver labours to be uppermost, and disdains to take p with low and vulgar atchievements. It hates continuement, and would fain get loose from all worldly fections; that so its inward and spiritual prospects ather ay not be intercepted, by any temporal good or fpi il, which darken and block it up. In love is the effection of pleasure and strength; it is higher than blest taven; broader than the sea; it fills the spacious bress in the strength in the strength; it is higher than blest all his creatures: and as it came from him, so it never rests till it have got above all finite beings, and center again in that only, that infinite Good, from

whence it originally forung,

The person excited by it flies with eager haste does every thing with chearfulness and pleasure, and fuffers no impediments to stop him in his course: h gives all things liberally, and yet possesses all, because his foul is united to that supreme good, in and from whom is derived all perfections, He looks not if much at the gift as the giver; and be the quality that what it will, it only ferves to render him mor thankful to its author. Love knows no bounds, n measure; but thinks it can never do enough; and Ti attempts things even above its strength, not confi dering so much what it is able, as what it is desired weet and disposed to effect; the vehemence of desired during takes off all sense of difficulty, and thinks nothing so great, but that it may and ought to aim at it to And hence proceed those great and astonishing at or, tainments, which love daily brings to pass, when tere the fire continues strong, and is not damped by flot over and faint-heartedness.

Love is eternally awake, never tired with labour mass nor oppressed with affliction, nor discouraged by sear asse but, like a clear and strong slame, is constant ferred mounting upwards, and makes its way thro' all of ward position. It cries continually in the ears (for ferver on clove is that cry which pierces the ears) of the mounts bight and all the like the continual of the mounts. high; and all the language of devout fouls inflame hes with it, is to this effect: my God, my love, thou at that my all; and I am entirely thine. Enlarge my hear love and make me capable of yet more love; that I make the feel and feast upon the sweetness of heavenly affect that it is the beauty, and even dissolve and lose my self in the beauty, at the time.

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fick extasies of this delectable disposition. Increase

and inspire this divine flame, that, not content to cel others, I may daily excel my felf. Teach the the fong of love, and receive me on high, to min in whom my foul delighteth; and fill me with he ch raptures of joy and praise, that even sense and on such more than my felf; nay, love my felf and all food men, to whom thou art dear, only in and for dee; for so hast thou commanded in that law of

we, which is but as it were a beam and radiency thy own glorious and divine excellence.

The love of God is quick in its motions, fincere its intentions, ardent and zealous in devotion;
rou veet to the foul, brave in attempting, patient in
elim during, faithful in executing, prudent in action, him by in refentment, generous and manly, and feeks at it of to please the person's self, but the person beloved.

at or, where a man seeks only his own advantage, there
there erest, not love, is the principle upon which he flow oves. Love is cautious and circumspect, sincere nd humble; not foft and effeminate, not fickle and pour mastical; not fond of vanities; but sober and grave, feat aste and refined, constant and sedate, severe and and ferved. This disposes us to submission and respect wards our superiors; to a mean and modest opirves on of our selves; to gratitude and devotion tomo ands God; it inspires hope and godly trust, even in ame nes of calamity and discomfort. And necessary it that it should do so, fince no man is so happy as hear love without pain, or always to live under the me ht of God's countenance, so as that no clouds affect buld ever intercept the cheering warmth of his fa-

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That man therefore deserves not the character of one that loves God, who is not sincerely dispose and heartily content to suffer any afflictions, which the divine providence judges sit to inslict; or think much to do whatever his will declares proper to be performed. In a word, the sharpest and most uppalatable proofs of our virtue, declare best the servency and sincerity of it; and if disasters or gree vous accidents cool or draw off our affections, this is an argument, that a man is not yet what the apostle requires we should all be, rooted and grounds in love, Ephes. iii. 17.

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CHAP. VII.

The tryal of true love.

CHRIST.

I HAVE observed, my son, thy notions of a vine love; but thou, alas! art not yet arrive to that resolute bravery and prudence there describe Disciple.] Lord, make me sensible wherein I sa

and teach me how to amend it.

Christ.] A small temptation shocks thy obedient Thou startest at difficulties, and fallest from thy of stedsastness, if I seem to withdraw my favour. To comforts and affistance of graces are to be zealout prayed for, but not with impatience: nor may thou so set they heart upon them, as presently to coil, if such supplies do not at all times answer to expectation. I hide my face to try thy courage for true christian magnanimity is most eminen seen in troubles and distresses; in turning the deep are to all those crafty infinuations of the enem which take the advantage of deep and melanche perplex

erplexity of heart, to ruin and feduce unstable ouls, by seducing them to despair. This virtue reices in prosperity, but does it with such temper, not to be offended, and backflide by reason of ad-

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He that loves prudently, keeps his eyes upon the iver, confiders the kindness and disposition of his iend, and values the gift by that, not by its own saction in my affection, than in the most profuse nd defirable benefits which flow from it. Not that would condemn all doubts and fad misgivings; for ofe are incident to the best men; and the infirmies of nature admit not such perfect evenness of ind, as is always alike affected with the love and lights of holiness. Those sensible pleasures that of de the effect of bounty and favour, and great inligence; not necessary and inseparable consequenribe s of virtue. The sweet foretastes of heavenly I fal ys are fuch as you cannot depend upon, till brought the fruition of that land of promise. And therethe prejudice of those who want them; because in is life they are given at discretion, and frequently ake way for a feverer and more feafonable discimay ine. And when that discipline takes place, then to persist in well doing, to strive manfully against all per it e reluctancies of flesh and blood, and hold out in urag spite of all the importunities and discouraging inent gestions of the tempter; this is a proof of true ritual bravery, and entitles such valiant comants to a noble reward, and exceeding bright wn, inche

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Of the Imitation of Jesus Chaist.

Let reason therefore, and a well-grounded faith not fancy and imagination, govern thy behaviour and, after what manner foever thy foul is affected let thy intentions of obedience be still the same, and thy perfeverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps that art all rapture and joy, and these extalies are an what the prophane world suppose, mere dreams and delufions: fometimes again thou wilt relapse into weakness and wandrings; these are not thy choice but thy misfortune; nor dost thou create them to thy felf, but fuffer them with much regret. Now what is not the man's own act, shall never be in puted to him as a fault; and what is thus by God permission, or the frailty of nature, if rightly me naged, will tend to thy advantage, and rather in

prove than endanger thy piety.

This indeed you must know, and constantly to member; that the inveterate enemy of fouls is eve labouring by all means to sool your zeal. He watch and greedily takes hold of all occasions to flacke your devotion, to prevail with you to neglect, abate of, your prayers and other holy exercises; divert your thoughts of Christ and his suffering and fix them upon objects of a different kind; beat you off from that ffrict guard, which oughts ways to be kept upon your foul; and to undermi your good intentions, and repeated refolutions. I conveys many loofe and wicked thoughts into you heart, uses a thousand sleights and artifices, to rem fent religion a tirefome, tedious and unnecessaria thing, and to draw off your attendance upon God prayers, in hearing his word, and in reading holy scriptures. And happy he thinks himself, by degrees he can draw you to a neglect of the

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hings: for nothing more provokes his malice, and roffes his defigns, than to fee men frequently upon heir knees, zealous in discovering and confessing heir fins; devout and attentive comers to church; nd constant receivers of the Lord's Supper. When herefore he would perfuade you to be cold and renifs in any matter of this nature, be fure to give o credit to his false and wheedling infinuations, for hey are so many snares laid to captivate and to deroy you. Turn fmartly back upon him, with a et thee behind me, Satan; "Blush, if thou canst, unclean spirit, at thy own treacherous villany; I am well aware of thy deadly baits; and fenfible that hell and death are upon the hook; thy fly deceits are lost upon me, for I am resolved already, and my Jesus, who vanquished thee upon the cross, will affift my weakness, and enable me to overcome thy temptations. Think not to terrify me with difficulties; for death and fufferings are light calamities, in comparison of guilt and fin; and these I infinitely rather chuse than once to comply with thy wicked motions. Be gone then, and for ever hold thy peace; for I will stop my ears, and am from this minute inflexibly deaf to thy mast troublesome solicitations. thinkest to run down a poor weak mortal, but even that mortal is a match for thee through Christ that strengthens him. And strengthen me he will; for the Lord is my light and salvation, subom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid? Psal. xxvii. That an host were banded together against me, yet will I not be dismay'd; for the Lord is my helper, and my God is the rock of my confidence." Fight

Fight therefore the good fight, and follow the captain of thy falvation, like a frout foldier: and, if at any time thou lose ground through human infirmities, rally thy forces again quickly, and enter upon a fecond engagement with redoubled vigor; not doubting feafonable affiftance from me. But if at any time thou prove victorious, let not this fuccess exalt thee beyond measure. For pride and arrogance are of fatal consequence, they often end in dangerous errors, and are justly punish'd with almost incurable blindness. Let the frequent examples of vain men, undone by their own folly and my just indignation, be fet before thy eyes, as fo many fea-marks, to wan thee from steering the same dangerous course: and the greater conquests thou obtainest over the devil and thy own frailties, the more humble and cautious let these advantages make thee in thy conduct; and of g the more just to God, in ascribing the whole success and glory to the powerful affistance of his spirit

CHAP. VIII.

Grace must be received without oftentation.

CHRIST.

Y fon, when thou feelest thy soul warmed with devotion and holy zeal for my service it will be adviseable to decline all those methods of publishing it to the world, which vain men are s industrious to take, and content thy felf with it being known to God and thy own conscience. Rather ther endeavour to moderate and suppress those pompurs. pous expressions of it, in which some place the ver miter perfection of zeal. Think meanly of thy own with tues. Boast not of that grace, whereby thou art and end

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pable of differing from another. But let the remembrance of thy own unworthiness make thee fear the loss of gifts, which thou didst not deserve ever to have. This is not only an undeferved, it is also a transient and uncertain privilege; for the brightest and warmest zeal is apt to languish and wax cold; and unless men could affure themselves of such a degree of grace, as would alter and fix these varible natures of theirs, the fervours of religious and holy defires can never be constant and equal.

While therefore thou enjoyest these pleasing pious comforts, humble thy foul with reflections upon thy mpotence and misery, thy coldness and deadness, when thou hast them not. And consider withal, hat the improvement and commendation of a chritian's virtue confists, not only in the thankful use f grace, but in a modest, humble and resigned emper, which can bear its being taken away without murmuring or despondency; still exciting and ncouraging it felf, still continuing the fame dilience in holy duties, and never suffering sloth, or espair, or discontent, to abate one tittle of a man's est endeavours, to do the utmost his condition is caable of.

This is an excellence which very few come up to; vice leness and impatience are the usual effects of spiridisappointments. Which yet is most unreasonrespectively, if we think at all, in whose disposal these, the well as all other successes are. For man cannot mand events; God is sole master of his own fapom purs. He gives to whom he pleases; nor will he be ver mited, otherwise than by his own wisdom, what or n vir ow much, or in what time and manner he shall give.

his best gifts into occasions of their own destruction, Thus some men of bold ungovern'd zeal aspire a things beyond their strength, and express more vehemence than conduct in their actions, perfectly carried out of themselves with eagerness: forget they are still poor infects upon earth, and think of nothing less than building their nest in hear ven. Now these are often left to themselves, and taught by fad experience, that the faint flutterings of man are weak and ineffectual, and that none four to heaven, except I affift his flight, and mount him

upon my own wings.

It is therefore highly expedient, that persons of more zeal than experience, should not proceed upon their own false measure of themselves, but refer their proceedings to the guidance, and better judgment of some persons, whom long time, and much ob fervation hath taught to temper those vain conceis they are apt to entertain of their own ftrength, and to proportion their undertakings to their circumstances. But this is a submission which humility must qualify them for. For he who is wise in his own eyes, feldom confents to be directed by another And this confideration makes a very moderate degree of knowledge, attended with a modest and govern able mind, much more fafe and eligible, than the highest attainments with pride and self-conceit. The mighty transports and great fatisfaction men fre quently feel from their own improvement in good ness, are of dangerous consequence, if they be suf fered to destroy the remembrance of a man's forme weakness, and his fears of relapsing into sin again And on the other hand, these fears may run in f by excess, if difficulties tempt men to despair, and be

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Of the Imitation of Jesus Christ. et melancholy distrusts of God's ability and readi= es to relieve and rescue them by the succours of hat grace, which knows how to expel and defeat

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The same disposition of soul, which leads to se= urity in times of prosperity and peace, inclines to earfulness and dejection of mind in the day of adersity and conflict. For would a man but guard simfelf against vain confidences, and proceed always with caution and prudence, when his graces and his lopes are at the highest; this would preserve him from those dangers, which unwary heat and too anguine hopes are apt to involve him in. And herefore, when you form to your self the fairest nd most promising expectations, it will be seasonable to confider, what may become of you, if God should hide his face, and abate or wholly withdraw those nlivening comforts, which now so much exalt you. And so again, when these are interrupted, support our spirits in those dark intervals, with the hope, hat day may break upon you again, and that this light of affliction is prolonged, to make you more dvised, and get the greater honour.

For such tryals as these are more for the advantage

of my faithful fervants, than a constant succession of rosperity and consolation could possibly be. They nust needs be so, since virtue does not consist in bundance of illumination and knowledge, but in owlines of mind, in meekness and charity, in a ful mind entirely resigned to God, and sincerely disposed o serve and please him; in a just sense of a man's wn vileness, and not only thinking very meanly of ne's felf, but being well content to be so thought

f by others.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of acknowledging our unworthiness before God.

DISCIPLE.

BEHOLD, now I take upon me to speak unto my Lord, who am but dust and ashes, Gen. xviii. vile and finful dust and ashes! For, should I entertain any better opinion of my felf, I make my God my enemy, and stand convicted by the undeniable testimony, and just reproaches of my own guilty conscience. But if I humble my soul, cast off all vain imaginations of merit, and think my felf that wretched thing I really am, thy grace exalts me, thy light cheers and supports me, and all that groundless pride, to which my corrupt heart is naturally disposed, vanishes into nothing. O! give me then a right understanding of my self; help me truly to ma discover what I am now, what I was originally, and E whence I came. That I am nothing, and proceeded y out of nothing, and, if destitute of thy grace, have uns nothing left, but what I had much better be with ad fout, namely, fin and infirmity. And yet as vile, 2 is m finful, as dejected, as I am of my felf, as foon as the y a bright beams of favour are cast upon me, my weak ir pones is made strong, and my heaviness turn'd into sis, joy. I cannot observe the sudden wondrous change has without aftonishment, and am not able to account any for the happy exaltation of my nature; which, the vites by its own weight inclined to fink perpetually, and hels, by a fatal tendency to fin and hell, prefs'd down teet with a load of flesh and frailty, is yet, by the might operations of grace, enabled to aspire to spiritual ru

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 161 nd refined objects, and take ardent flights to thee nd heaven.

This, I am duly fensible, is the strange effect of hy free grace alone, preventing my defires, inspiring eligious thoughts, affifting my weaknesses, supplying ny wants, rescuing me from dangers innumerable; which, without these powerful succours, must unaoidably destroy and swallow me up. For an inor-inate love of my self was formerly my ruin, but a ncere love of thee, and an entire dependance upon by goodness, recovers and restores me; and the nore I love and trust in thee, the less reason I find value and have any confidence in any thing of my wn. For thou, O dearest redeemer, art bountiful nd kind, far beyond my deserts: my deserts! alas, and bey are none at all, or worse than none! But thou rally sceedest even my largest desires, and givest more; then sinitely more, than I either dare presume to ask, or

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and Eternal thanks and praise be therefore rendred to y God, for that unspeakable goodness, which dishave sins not to bestow the precious gifts of his grace with ad spirit, upon a wretch unworthy the least of all ile, a smercies. Yea, blessed and adored be his liberaas the y and long-suffering, which, in despight of all weak ir provocations, continues to engage those by kindhang had justly forfeited all future favours; and by had justly forfeited all future favours; and; by countary excellent endearments, and holy importunities; h, the vites and draws men to himself and their own hapdown eet Jesus, extend thy compassion; and continue might v care of us; who are too prone to neglect thee; piritual ruin ourselves. Oh! bring us to thy self; by

thankful, humble, pious dispositions; for we our felves are nothing, and thou art holiness and health; our only strength and deliverer.

CHAP. X. Of doing all to the glory of God.

CHRIST.

HE fure and only way to happiness, is, to make me; my fon; the chief and ultimate end of all thy actions and defires. By this thy fincerity will best be proved; by this thy mind will be refined and purified from all those fordid interests ble and partial respects, which are apt to debauch huil of man nature, too much of it felf addicted to private gain and felfishness, and those false prospects of hap him piness which the love of this world vainly proposes For, as foon as any man descends to these, and seeks himself in all he does, he finds his own inability to compass his intentions, and grows barren and unprofitable. Keep me then constantly in view, and aim at nothing but the advancement of my honours which is indeed but reasonable and just, since I am the first and perfect good; the source from whend his i all things flow, and therefore all of right return to and should center at last in me again. I ask but a Themy own, the tribute and acknowledgment of the control of the co fueceffes given by my providence, of the action che performed by virtue of my concurrence, of the ver ciou faculties and powers originally inspired by my creatank ting fpirit.

The high and honourable, as well as mean appr, to fourtain, and the most powerful of the sons of me sures

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can do nothing, till furnished with ability from hence, This spring is inexhaustible, and they who receive most, and are grateful in their returns, I water with more liberal measures of grace. Them that honour me, I never fail to honour and bless in a visible and eminent manner; but, if men glory in any thing but the Lord, I blast their devices, disappoint their hopes, and make them ashamed of their vain boastngs. For fo have I ordered matters by my providence, that no true lasting satisfaction shall ever fill hat heart which fets its affections upon private and altry advantages. Crosses from without, and perplexities from within, are the certain consequences of worldly defires, and felfish principles.

If therefore thou hast received or done any good

hing, take care of misplacing the honour and thanks leeks his is robbing God of his due, from whom men re-ty to tive whatever they have, or are, and stand in duty nd equity bound, to pay him their most grateful aim cknowledgements. Since therefore the whole is your my gift, when I demand the whole thanks and raife, I demand but the product of my own; and hend his is what, as I injure no man in requiring, fo I

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out of This is the true principle of justice; necessary to." of the confidered, and thoroughly submitted to; because checks and utterly confounds that other most per-cious principle of pride and vain-glory, to which ankind are so exceedingly inclined. Nor is it less nducive to their happiness, than to their duty. an at or, where this generous love and regard of me of me cures the man from envy and discontent, partiality

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and every other passion, that uses to torment little and worldly minded people. For this respectful deference and fervent love of God enlarges the foul, and fills it with thoughts truly great and noble. And therefore this is a certain mark of true and heavenly wisdom to make me its only joy, and hope; for, how can he be wife, who does not fee, that God's the perfection and original of all good, and that the necessary consequence of his being so, is that he's to be praised, honoured, admired, in, and for, and above all; fince all the good which men presend to esteem, is by communication from him; an emanation from his fulness, an effect of that sole, that universal cause?

CHAP. XI.

God's service is perfect freedom.

DISCIPLE.

WILL again take the confidence to speak unto the Lord; nor ought I indeed to hold my peace, but address my self to thee, my Lord and God, my heavenly king, that fittest on thy throne far above the skies, and thus will I proclaim thy mercies and my own happiness. How pure, O Lord, how sweet, how exquisite are the pleasures thou reservest for them that fear thee, that delight themselves in thy love, that are entirely devoted to thy fervice. No Fortongue can sufficiently express the wondrous joys and all the transports, and ravishing extasses, which fill the ng to pious fouls, inflamed with the love, and employed en t boundless as thy goodness; that goodness, which exerce, erted it self in commanding and forming me out of th, nothing

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othing. And, when that being which thou gavest was rendred liable to eternal misery, a fresh and et more valuable instance of thy mercy, was that f bestowing upon me a new and better life, when I vas worse than nothing. For thou hadst compassion n my weakness and my wandrings. Thou soughtest nd with tender care broughtest back thy lost sheep, aughtest me the right way, helpedst me to walk in t, and didft instruct and guide me in thy love.

O thou over-flowing spring of endless love! how hall I worthily magnify thee, how can I forget thee; hee, who in my lowest ebb of misery, didst conescend so graciously, so effectually, to remember me? Whose kindness rescued me from death, and far exeeded all my hopes; restored me to that favour, which my fins had forfeited, and shewed it self a fiend to that wretch who was become thine, and

is own enemy. What shall I render to the Lord or all the benefits he bath done me? If I resolve to erve thee, yet how poor a tribute is that, to him shom all created nature is engaged to serve? This so far from a sufficient return, that I ought rather admire thy mercy, and esteem it an honour to by felf when thou vouchfafest to accept the service so poor, so worthless a creature, and dost not distain to reckon me amongst those, whom thou suf-

rest to do thee homage.

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For even in this I pay thee but thy own, fince I ad all I have are thine. But why do I speak of serhelding thee, when by a most astonishing condescension, oyed en thou, the mighty God, art pleased to serve me. bjed or this is the effect of that excellently good provi-ex- ence, which hath contrived and ordered heaven and of th, and all the creatures in such a manner, that they should be useful and beneficial to mankind; who hath appointed bleffed spirits above for guards and ministers to the heirs of salvation; and, which is most surprizing, when thou thy self, for my fake, hadst taken upon thee the form of a servant, and wert made an afflicted man! When thou didst give thy life for undone finners, and still dost give thy felf in grace, and hast engaged to give thy self, even the full and eternal fruition of thy glorious Godhead,

to every fincere believer.

O! that it were in my power to make suitable returns, for love which passes, not my thanks only, but even my knowledge! O! that my ways were aw made so direct, that my whole life might be one continued act of gratitude and obedience! Nay, such is he my infirmity, that I must be content to wish, that any one day of that life might be employed as it ought pope to be in thy service. I know, O Lord, that thou end art worthy to receive all duty, and honour, and etin praise for eyer. I am sensible that thou art my rightful lord, and I thy poor unprofitable fervant; onq that the utmost I can do is thy just due, and that I con ought to take unspeakable delight in thanking, praising and obeying thee; that nothing else but this ich should give me any satisfaction, and that, when income have laid my self out entirely upon it, I still have tiss done too little. This is the real persuasion, this is the the earnest desire of my soul; and where my powered falls short of my inclination, there do thou, I be feech thee, strengthen and supply what is wanting by thy grace, that my deeds and deportment may bear testimony and an edequate proportion to my pious disposition.

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To be the meanest of thy servants is the highest dvancement; to despise and forsake all for thee, is rue riches and honour. They who thus enter themelves into thy family, and chearfully undertake this ask, shall have a glorious reward; they will feel the leasures of this world, infinitely paid; infinitely outone, by the better and larger amendments of grace and divine comforts in exchange. They who thus and theinselves to thee, that abandon worldly cares, nd attend to the one thing necessary, attain to a rue and generous freedom of foul. For the strait way of thy commandments is the only compleat were aw of liberty; thy fervice is perfect freedom. Of appy confinement! which fets men at large from this he flavery of fin, from worldly cares and incumany rances, from the insupportable tyranny of unruly ught ppetites and domineering passions! O blessed dethous endance! which makes us of the most high God's and etinue, raises us up to a level with the angels, renmy ers us dear to the Almighty, a terror to evil spirits, on on on one over our greatest and siercest enemy, and ecommends us to the love, the praise, the imitation, or all good men. Who would not eagerly embrace this ich a service, where the very work is pleasant, the new accouragements paid down in hand noble, great, and have disfactory, and the wages promised in recompence his it our labours, happiness exquisite, unspeakable, nowed the everlasting? ower ad everlasting? I be-

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Of regulating our desires.

CHRIST.

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Y ET still, my son, there are many things in which thou art not sufficiently instructed.

Disciple.] Lord, be thou pleased to let me know,

and enable me to understand, and do them.

Christ. Thy defires must be reduced into subjection, and my will take place in every thing; nor must thy own private interest, but the zeal and regard for my honour, and the obedience due to my commands, be the governing principle of all thy actions. You feel defires, like inward springs, put you into motion; and very earnest sometimes you are of doing what you are thoroughly perfuaded is good. But, even when the thing it felf is commendable, the intention and motive men go upon, ought to be feriously considered. For it makes a mighty difference, whether I or themselves, be principally in their thoughts. Now this discovery is not hard to make. For, if my honour be their great concern, howfoever my providence disposa their affairs, they will conclude what I do best, and will be contented with it. But if under this difguise of holiness, there be a lurking corruption of private and by-respects, if the love of gain makes men frugal, or ambition virtuous, or the praise of the world charitable, or the confideration of their own health temperate, these are principles upon which no dependance can fafely be had. Their conduct will be unequal, and vary as events do; and every

very disappointment of their expectations will pro-

uce trouble and impatience.

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Don't therefore be too confident of every fort of clination to do well; but first advise with me, and ske care to build upon a good foundation. For men tho act upon indirect ends, very often repent when is too late; and that which at first they proposed reat fatisfaction and advantage from, proves at last heir torment and loss. Nay, I must give you this orther caution yet, that even good inclinations are ot to be executed at first fight, nor rashly pursued vithout a diligent and prudent observation. For it may be your duty sometimes, to put some restraints pon the very best intentions. They who neglect his, and give free scope to their zeal by too great agerness, often exceed the bounds of moderation nd decency; fometimes give offence to their breren by their extravagant heats, and impetuous llies; and fometimes, upon any refistance or diffiulty, which obstructs those precipitate fervours, lose I their inward peace, defift from their good degns, and fall from the heighth of rapture, to the tremities of melancholy and despair. So that, to nder thy zeal in well-doing in all points what it ight to be, it is by no means sufficient, that it be mest and well-disposed, unless it be also sober, and gular, and difcreet.

Again, there are some occasions and circumstans, which render a fort of holy violence necessary, d oblige men to act quite contrary to their incliation; to bear no manner of regard to flesh and nse, or what will be most agreeable any farther an may ferve to fet the mind in array against them, d resolutely engage in a formal war, for the re-

ducing, or keeping them in obedience to the superior faculties of the soul. For, by thus frequently controlling, and counter-working all that human nature bath a tendency to, the outward man is by degree qualified for duty, and acquires a peculiar readiness of doing, or suffering, whatever shall be imposed upon it. And in these exercises the first soundations are laid, of contentedness with a little, of satisfaction in a private and neglected state, a mean and narrow fortune; and of patience under any crosses or calamities, without those murmuring thoughts, which are apt to beget hard and irreverent reflections, and too often break out in wicked complaints and saucy expostulations, against the justice, and wisdom, and goodness of God and his providence.

CHAP. XIII.

The necessity and reasonableness of patience.

DISCIPLE.

my dear Lord's instructions, and the little experience I have of the world, patience seems to me a most necessary virtue; for the condition of me in this life is so exposed to calamities and forrows that, in despite of all his endeavours after peace troubles beset him every where, and his state is the of warfare and continual suffering.

Christ.] It is so, my son; nor is it sit it should be otherwise. For those men have a wrong notion of peace, who make it consist in freedom from suffering; in either having no troubles, or being insensible of any. This is a state, neither attainable to a man, nor accommodated to a christian. The peace

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would have thee aspire after, is such as consists ery well with afflictions. And this is gained when man hath brought himself to that equal compoare, and refigned temper of foul, as firmly to per-It in his duty, and to rest satisfied in the dispensaons of God, when he thinks fit to try his virtue, wery great and grievous adversities. If this apear a hard faying, think how much harder it will e to endure the torments of hell, and the implaable vengeance of an angry God. Nature, as well religion, teaches men, of two evils to chuse the es. And this is done, when they set themselves ibmissively to undergo tribulation here, for the ke of God and a good conscience; that they may, y fuch patient fuffering, deliver themselves from e dreadful effects of his wrath, and everlasting unishment hereafter.

Now tribulation is a portion distributed in comon to all the fons of men; distributed in large teafures, even to those children of this generation, hich thou perhaps vainly imaginest to be most exupted from it. For even the gayest and most procrous of them all are not without their many and re evils. 'Tis true indeed, they take a great deal pleasure, indulge their inclinations without conoul, and fo their mifery makes a lefs fenfible imression upon their spirits; but miseries they have. r, put the very best of their case, and suppose their ys to be without any interruption, their wishes ithout any disappointment; yet, even thus, how ng would their happiness last? Alas, they vanish ke a dream, and all their prosperity soon scatters ke smoak: nay, not only their enjoyments themwes, but the very remembrance of them perish in

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a moment. Their life is but a vapour; and death will be fure to fwallow up them and their gayetic

in fpeedy and perpetual oblivion.

But this is putting the case more favourably than it ever happens in reality: for, even in this life, their plenty and pleafures are intermix'd with misfortune. and all their fweets allayed with a bitter mixture of cares and fears, and inward perplexities of mind The very objects that minister pleasure, bring pain along with them too. And this is one great argument, how wife a providence the world is governed by, that the very inordinacy of those affections which purfue the pleafures of fense so greedily, should prove a torment to the guilty mind, and embitted those very pleasures they indulge. These very pleasures fures too are short and fleeting, treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a shame and blemil to human nature; and, if men be not fersfible of this, that ignorance proceeds from their own inadvertency. Their reason is intoxicated with present e delights, and their minds blinded by vicious habits by which they degenerate into brutes, stupidly aban hak don themselves to the transitory pleasures of sin and lust, at the expence of everlasting pains; and confult the present gratification of a vile mortal body with the ruin of a precious and immortal foul.

Go not thou therefore after their excesses, no place thy happiness in serving, but rather in commanding, fubduing, mortifying thy own inclinate ons. Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall gran thee thy heart's defire, Pfal. xxxvii. For this deligh will teach thee, that the happiness of man consist in inward and spiritual satisfactions, in the contemp of this world and its empty pleasures. And the let

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hese are esteemed and affected, the greater and nore exquisitely sweet shall those generous and nole pleasures prove, which result from the experience of God's favour, and the permanent comforts of a

But still these comforts are not to be had, without nuch labour, many conflicts, and sharp sufferings. ind for the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, and he confirmed habits of vice, introduce great diffi-gular sulties; and demand time and pains to conquer. and and conquered they may be, by introducing the ons, contrary habits of virtue. The flesh indeed will reitte ion will filence those murmurings, and resolute olea-perseverance in good works vanquish all thy reludes tances. The subtle old serpent will seduce and mile importune thee, but prayer and good thoughts drive e the evil spirit away; and fasting and holy exercise, r constant lawful business, will keep him out. For seen he never enters so easily, so successfully, as when his deness sets open the door, and an empty heart ban makes room for his wicked fuggestions.

CHAP. XIV.

Obedience to Superiors; enforced by Christ's example:

CHRIST.

NOW, my fon, that the man who refuses obedience, rejects the grace, and excludes light limself from the favour of God; and, by seeking nist is own private advantage inordinately, breaks the emperder, and obstructs the good of the good of the eles ublick. Difrespect and contumacy to superiors, is

an infallible mark of rebellious appetites, and of passions not reduced to the government of reason and religion. Submission therefore is of singular use, for subduing the flesh and its lusts; and a good preservative against temptations. For the foreign enemy will be more fuccessfully opposed, when the domestick one is first vanquished, and all quiet with in. And man himself is his own worst enemy, Nor are his circumstances ever more full of danger, then when the fenfitive raifes infurrections, and would dethrone the rational foul. And, in order to this bringing the inferior faculties to reason, an humble opinion of yourfelf is necessary; for partiality and pride are the fource of all the diforders in thy own breaft, and all the disturbance given by unruly men to fociety, and good government, of all kinds.

And what fuch mighty merit is there in this fubmission? What disparagement can it be thought to thee, who art dust and vileness, when thou remembrest, that I my felf, the almighty majesty of heaven, and the Lord of all the universe; I, who created thee, and the whole world, out of nothing, did yet condescend to a state of subjection, and appeared in the very lowest, most servile, and despicable form, for thy fake, who art nothing? And why but that fo thy pride might have no pretence to sup port it felf, after so eminent a pattern of humility Learn then, thou wretch, to humble thy felf; and like that earth, of which thou art, be even content to be trampled upon, and trodden under foot: la thy felf, like the streets, to the feet of infulting men who walk over thee, and never rest till thou haft broken thy own perverfeness, and art in a con-

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Of the Imitation of Jesus Christ. 175

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Till this is done, purfue thy paffions with renorfeless indignation, and spare them not, till the ery last remains of pride be absolutely suppressed nd killed in thy heart. And if thou fometimes ind ill usage and tyrannical barbarity, yet still conder, thou art but a man, and ought'ft not to comlain; nay, rather confider, that thou art a finner, n justice configned over to hell and eternal punishnent; and let the anger of an offended God, which trictly is thy portion and defert, check thy refentents of the insolence and injuries, the reproachful. reatment, and unjustifiable hardships, which men hav fometimes impose upon thee. This wrath of od thou haft provoked, but I in mercy spared bee, I had compassion on thy foul, and ransomed from death by my own blood. And canst thou hink, that no return is due for fuch mercy? Yes: now, that I require thou shouldst be sensible of the stonishing greatness of my love, and shew that infe by gratitude and humility; by a modest and espectful obedience to my representatives here bew; and by not disdaining to suffer any shame and ontempt, any injustice and barbarity, when provience and duty call thee to it, which I, thy mafter, ly God, did not grudge to undergo for thy fake, hilft converfing in human flesh upon earth.

CHAP. XV.

God's judgments are to be consider'd, for our bumiliation.

DISCIPLE.

WHEN thou, Lord, utterest thy voice in judgments my joint and the voice in judgments, my joints are loofed, my limbs quake for fear, my very foul is in confusion, and trembles at thy thunder. In the midst of these horrors I begin to reflect, that the heavens themfelves are not pure in thy fight, and that even the angels thou hast charged with folly, Job xxv. If then those exalted intellectual spirits were not able to ftand before thee, and kept not their first estate, what must become of such a wretch as I am? If even the stars fell from the firmament, how can dust and ashes hope to escape? They, who did eat angel's food, degenerated from their primitive excellence, and fed on husks with swine; how then should a creature preserve its innocence, whose very original is impure?

This, Lord, convinces me, that there is no holiness but what is derived from thee alone; no wisdom without thy governance; no strength a sufficient defence, if thou withdraw thy gracious protection; no continence or abstemiousness effectual, except thou guard it; no watchfulness against the enemy, unless thy wakeful eyes keep all our approaches, and repulle the affaults of the tempter. If thou cease to support us with thy mighty hand, the waves fwallow us up; we fink and perish without thee, and with thee walk upon the sea in safety: weak and unstable are our refolutions, but thy grace gives strength and perseve-

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rance. Cold and timorous are our hearts, but thou warmest them with zeal, and inspirest them with courage. Lift up then, Lord, our hands that hang down, and our feeble knees, that we faint not in this spiritual warfare; and enable those who can do nothing without thee, to conquer all difficulties

through thy strength.

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I know, O Lord, that if any good thing feem to be in me, yet even this deserves my meanest opinion, and will in no degree justify my thinking otherwise of my self, than as a most vile and worthless wretch. And therefore, when thy angry justice afflicts me, it is my duty, with the profoundest humility, to lay my mouth in the dust, and meekly submit to thy correcting hand. For, though I cannot discover all the reasons of thy mysterious judgments; yet this I find no difficulty to discern, that my fins deserve severer treatment, and that I my self am nothing, and that I proceeded out of nothing. 0 the dark abyss, in which I can find nothing relating to my felf, but vanity and nothing! Where then is the presumption, where the pride, the lofty conceit of my worth and virtue? Whither are all my vain confidences, and towring imaginations fled? Thy judgments, Lord, have fwept them away like a torrent; and all are funk in those unsearchable depths. These shew me to my self, and justify the prophet's rebuke, shall the clay exalt itself against the potter that fashioned it? Isa. xiv. Behold, as the slay is in the hands of the potter, so is every mortal nan in thy hand, O Lord, Jer. xviii.

And is it possible for that soul to swell with insoence and vain conceit, which is duly sensible of thy najesty, and submits to it, with that lowliness and refigned submission which thy truth directs? No, no, not all the voices of mankind, conspiring unanimously in his praise, can blow him up to fond conceits of his own excellence, when once his hopes and heart are fixed on God. For he considers, that all these are but so many copies of himself; frail and feeble, deceivable and perishing, emptiness and nothing. That they, as well as their words, are only air and sound, and both will quickly vanish together; but God and his truth remain for evermore. Cease therefore from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of? Isa. xi. and endeavour to have praise of him, who resisteth the proud, but in his own due time exalteth them, who humble themselves under his mighty hand, I Pet. iv.

CHAP. XVI.

With what reserves we ought to pray.

CHRIST.

Lord, if this, my son, be the language and style of all thy prayers: Lord, if it be thy pleasure, grant me this request; if what I ask conduce to thy glory, do thou be pleased to give and prosper it: Lord, if thou, to whom all things and their consequences are perfectly known, seest that this will be for my true advantage, not only bestow it, but, with it, grace to use it to thy glory: but if thou see it may prove hurtful to me, do not only deny my petitions, which proceed from ignorance and mistake; but remove far from me the very desire of that, which cannot be obtained without my prejudice.

This last is a very reasonable and expedient request; because many desires, which seem, not in-

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nocent only, but even virtuous and wife, profitable and praife-worthy, in a man's own eyes, are yet neither inspired by God, nor agreeable to his will: nor is it easy to discern, whether one be acted by a good or evil spirit; or whether, in the matter of his prayers, his own inclination and private respects do not determine him. And many a one, who hath fancied the impulse of divine grace, and persuaded himself, that he hath been directed and acted by it all along, finds the delusion out at last: and what he imputed to the spirit of God, proves in the end a suggestion of the devil, or the eager longing of his own vain mind.

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The furest way then never to offend God in thy defires, and to be accepted in thy addresses to him, will be to temper all thy inclinations with his fear, and not fo much as indulge a fecret wish, without fuch refervations, as may testify an entire submission to his divine disposal. And when those wishes break out into words, men would do well to conceive and present them in such forms, as may express some check upon themselves, and mighty caution in restraining their tongues from asking any thing in a peremptory manner; but leaving the matter entirely to God's better choice. As thus; "Lord, thou " knowest whether the having, or the being denied the " matter of my petition, be most convenient; and "therefore all I beg is, that what thou feeft most "expedient, may be done; I ask, indeed, as is my " duty, but I prefume not to prescribe to thy hea-" venly wisdom. Give, therefore, Lord, such things, " and in fuch measures, and at such times, as thou " feeft most suitable for me. Deal with me as thou "knowest is necessary: for that I am well affured Z 2

180 Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

"is best for me, which is most agreeable to thy will, and most conducive to thy glory. Appoint me any station, and use me as thy own; turn and change me, and my fortune, at pleasure: I only beg to be qualified for thy dispensations, to use them rightly, and greatly to improve under them. For I am thy servant, devoted to thee without the least reserve: I desire not to live to my self, but to thee; oh! that I might be enabled faithfully and worthily to perform that homage and duty, to all which my heart is most freely and sincerely disposed."

CHAP. XVII.

A prayer for grace to do the will of God.

DISCIPLE.

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HEAR me, most merciful faviour, I hum-bly beseech thee, and let thy grace be ever " present with thy weak and unworthy servant. I " am not of my felf able to do, or think any thing 56 that is good. O! let thy spirit assist my weak " endeayours, vanquish the various temptations that " fo powerfully affail me; fix my inconstant mind, and follow me all the days of my life, that I may persevere in good works unto the end. Regulate my affections and defires, and confine them to fuch objects only, as are well-pleafing to thee. " thy will be the guide and measure of mine, and " let mine steadfastly conform to thy pleasure. Re-" move far from me all inclinations and aversions, but fuch as agree with those of the blessed Jesus. " Help me to die daily to the world, and to the things of the world; and mortify my vanity to ec that

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"that degree, that even shame and contempt for thy sake, may be not only supportable, but welcome to me. Let all my hopes and wishes center in thee alone; and nothing appear desirable, in comparison of a pure heart and a good conscience.
For thou, O Lord, art my peace, thou my only rest; in thee alone is pleasure and true satisfaction, and all without thee is misery and torment. Oh!
grant me this blessed retreat, this happy security, that I may abandon all the salse appearances of happiness here below, and find ease and endless repose in thy love and favour, thou true, thou chief, thou eternal good, of all pious souls."

CHAP. XVII.

God is our only comfort in trouble.

DISCIPLE.

Whatever R comforts and happiness I propose, this is not the time, and place of enjoying them, but I expect that blessed fruition in another state. For what would it avail, could I attain the utmost delights the world can afford, when a very short space of time must of necessity put a period to them? Do not then mistake thy own happiness, oh, my soul! for these things are not, cannot procure thy rest. The fulness of joy and undissurbed pleasure is no where to be found, but in God only: he is the comforter of the afflicted, he is the wealth of the poor, he is the support and strength of the weak, he is the glory and everlasting rewarder of the humble.

Nor let it annoy thy peace, or discourage thy hope, that thou canst not yet aspire to thy promised felicity,

felicity. For God is faithful and cannot lie. Only wait his time patiently, and thou shalt not fail of his mercy, and an abundant recompence of thy faith and patient trust in due season. But if this delay draw off thy affections to present comforts, and abate thy zeal for future and distant rewards, thou shalt defire earthly bleffings, and not be filled; and at the fame time shalt lose those heavenly and eternal joys, which alone can fatisfy, and make thee happy for ever. Use then these temporal things, but love none but the things that are eternal. The present were not defign'd for enjoyment, but for necessity and convenience. Thy nature is not cut out for them, nor is it in their power to make thee perfect; tho' all this mortal state is capable of, were united together for that purpose. For God alone is good, large enough to fill the defires of an immortal foul; he only is proportion'd to thy wants and noble faculties; and the happiness to be met with in him, is not that transitory, imperfect thing, which the children of this generation fondly covet and admire; but that exquifite, that infinite and inward delight, of which the pure in heart, and spiritual persons, receive some fweet foretaftes and pledges, by having their converfation in heaven, while they themselves are upon earth. For man is vain, and all his comforts like him; empty and unfatisfactory, false and fleeting, fwift in decay, and verily of short continuance: but those from God resemble the perfections of their author, spiritual and true, immutable, infinite and eternal. A truly pious foul can never be destitute, because he constantly bears his happiness about him, even the bleffed Jesus, the divine comforter; and, when

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Bleffed be thy mercy, O dearest Jesus! Bleffed be thy reviving presence! O let me never be deprived of this inestimable bliss! While I have this consolation within me, I feel no want of earthly enjoyments; for this supplies and exceeds them all. Oh! let me thankfully rejoice in thy favour, and the light of thy countenance shining upon me! Or, if at any time thou withdraw those bright beams, and interpose a cloud of forrow; yet even then preserve me from fad distrust, and let the consideration of thy will, which is always best, be my support in my most gloomy and most melancholy circumstances. Let me not cast away my hope and confidence, because thou hidest thy face for a season; but help me to discern the great wisdom and benefit of such trying dispensations, and to support my faith with the prospect of that reward, which is laid up in heaven for those, upon whom patience hath its perfect work. For thou, O Lord, art gracious and merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke thee, yet wilt thou not always be chiding, nor keep thy anger for ever, Psal. ciii. but wilt turn again, and in much compassion revive thy suffering servants, that they may rejoice in thee, and triumph over their calamities.

CHAP. XIX.

Of casting our care upon God.

CHRIST.

Y fon, be content, that I should dispose of thee and all thy affairs, as my divine wisdom sees sit; for I best know what is convenient for thee. Thou judgest rashly, and art liable to human frailties. Sense and present satisfactions blind thy eyes, and byass thy understanding; but christians, who should walk by faith, and not by sight, must not be govern'd by the same measures, which common men make use of, in distinguishing good and evil accidents.

Disciple. Lord, I acknowledge my infirmity; and am fenfible, that thy care and concern for me is more prudent, more tender, than that I have for my felf. And he hath made but a small progress in the school of Christ, whose weak faith is still to learn that lesson, of being satisfied with all thy dispensations, and casting his care upon thee. All therefore that I beg, is the establishing my heart in the way of thy commandments; and, fo long as I swerve not from truth and righteousness, secure my soul, and, for the rest, do thy pleasure. For thou art wife, and just, and good; and such, I am sure, are all the methods of thy providence; though human understandings may not distinctly perceive, nor be able to account for the consequences of them. If therefore thou condemn me to darkness and affliction, I will praise and thank thee for thy deserved correction, even in the midst of my trouble. Or, if thou sparest the rod, and makest my darkness to be light,

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light, I will then thankfully receive the bleffing, and magnify the favour which I know I do not deferve.

Christ. This is indeed, my fon, the disposition and deportment befitting the character and conduct of my faithful children. And all, who profess to walk with me in piety and virtue, must bring themselves to a soul so even, so resign'd, that suffering and joy, poverty or riches, may be entertain'd alike. The one, without murmuring or complaint; the other, without the least pride or change of temper. For both are equally the appointment of my providence, and, as fuch, should be met with chearful-

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Disciple.] Lord, I am willing to endure whatever thou art pleased to lay upon me. I do desire to receive good and evil, the fweet and bitter, the comforts and the croffes of this life, with the very same resentments of mind. Nay, not only to receive, but to be thankful for both, fince both come from thy own hand, which cannot err in ordaining all my events. This only I implore, that, in all changes of condition, thou would'st in thy mercy preserve me from fin: for, while I keep my innocence, and continue in thy love, not calamity, nor death, nor hell itself, shall make me afraid. However thou may'st exercise my patience, or frown upon me at present; yet so long as thou dost not cast me off for ever, nor blot my name out of thy book of life, I am above all danger; and the utmost power, and malice of fortune, and enemies, and devils combined together, can never hurt me.

CHAP. XX.

Christ our pattern of patience in affliction.

CHRIST.

M for thy falvation; I bore the punishment due to thee, and all the miseries, to which human mature was and is exposed. I bore them, not by constraint, but choice, and urged by no necessity, but that which powerful love induced me to. And one great end, for which I condescended to do so, was to teach thee patience by this example; and, that my willing fufferings might dispose thee to submit to the necessary incumbrances of thy present condition, without reluctance and murmuring. Sorrow became familiar to me! Sorrow was my constant attendant from the manger to the cross! For every hour produced some fresh instance of it. My circumstances were low, and I contented my felf with the want of even the necessaries of life; my innocence was flandered, and daily complaints and reproaches were founding in my ears; shame and contempt I entertain'd without return or angry resentment; my good deeds were repaid with malice and ingratitude, my miracles blasphemed, and my doctrine traduced and vilely mifrepresented.

Disciple. Yes, Lord, I read the history of thy invincible meekness with wonder and astonishment and cannot but infer from thence, that, fince that wert pleased to give such amazing proofs of an entire take obedience to thy heavenly father's will; I, who am a wretched finner, and not only subject to these mis feries by the condition of my nature, but one, who

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have deserved them as chastisements for my transgreffions, am much more obliged, with an entire submission, to receive whatever thy providence thinks fit to inflict; and must by no means repine at the weight, or the continuance of any burthen thou shalt lay upon me in this present world. If any thing here feems heavy, yet it is rendred much easier and more supportable, by the affistance of thy grace, by the contemplation of thy example, and by the many patterns of constancy and virtue, which thy now glorious faints, but once afflicted fervants, who travelled the same rugged journey of life, have in all ages fet for my imitation and encouragement. I plainly fee, under this Gospel-state, a mighty support, which even thy own peculiar people wanted under the old law. For then the way to heaven was dark, and the prospect at their journey's end less glorious and inviting. Few then applied themselves with zeal to seek a future and spiritual kingdom; nor could they do fo with equal encouragement, till thy meritorious death had opened an entrance into the high and holy place. But how contentedly, how thankfully, ought I to tread in thy bleffed steps, sustained by the assurance of eternal rewards, and directed in the right way by the light of thy doctrine? For thou art the way, the truth, and the life, John xiv. Thy afflictions have taught me, and all believers, that tribulation is the passage to thy heavenly kingdom; and that the proper methou thod of attaining thy crown, is being made a parentire taker of thy cross. Had'st thou not gone before us, who would have the heart to follow? Who could be mis persevere in a course of sufferings? Nay, the thou who haft thus thewed us the way, yet how unwilling, A a 2

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how backward are we to follow still? And, if neither thy miracles, nor thy precepts, thy wondrous humiliation, nor thy glorious exaltation, can warm us into greater zeal and resolution, than by lamentable experience we daily see and feel they do; how wretchedly slothful, alas! how cold, and motionless, should we have stood; had not thy grace and wonderful condescension vouchsafed to grant us the advantage of so clear a light, and the prevailing motive of so bright an example?

CHAP. XXI.

Of bearing injuries; and how we may judge of true patience.

CHRIST.

EASE thy complaints, my fon, and, when afflictions threaten to attack thee, call to remembrance what I endured for thy fake: nay, not what I endured for thine only, but what fo many brave and generous faints have fince courageoufly endured for mine. Alas! thy tryals yet are fmill, nor hast thou refisted unto blood, as I and they have done. Their difficulties were greater, their temptations sharper, their forrows more piercing, their exercises more severe; and yet in these they were more than conquerors. It will therefore be of great service to the confirming thy hope and patience, if thou dost diligently compare thy very light, with their much heavier burthen; and reproach thy felf for finking under a weight, which they would scarce have felt. But, if thy own load feem so unsupportable, and thou canst hardly be brought to think the case of others so much more deplouş

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deplorable; confider, whether this false estimate does not proceed from partial affection, tenderness to thy felf, and a fretful impatience, rather than from the true nature and reason of the thing. For these corrupt men's judgments, and make them fee their own and other peoples circumstances with very different But be thy ideas true or mistaken, yet still the greater and the less calamities call equally for submission and constancy. And it is not the degree or measure, but the author and the consequence of fuffering, which is the proper motive to patience.

Now the better thou art composed under any trouble, the more commendable is thy wisdom, and the larger will be thy recompence. Nay, not only so, but the easier will be thy lot too. For consideration will reconcile thee to it, and time and experience make it familiar. Nor matters it much, who are the immediate instruments, or from what next hand thy afflictions come. For those are very idle pretences, which men usually labour to cover their want of temper withal: " Had this been done by " an enemy or a stranger, I could have born it; " but from a friend, a relation, one whom I have " highly obliged, and have a right to expect better " usage from, what flesh can bear such baseness and " ingratitude? Had I given any just occasion for " that disparaging report, it would never have vexed me; but to be flander'd and abused, without " any ground, without the least fault or provocation " of mine, I think it's very hard: the thing it felf " I could away with; but the person and the par-" ticular circumstances, put me out of all patience." Alas! these are nice and frivolous distinctions, such as are altogether foreign and impertinent to the matter

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ter in hand; and what the virtue of patience is no way concern'd in. For this takes injuries and affronts by the great, without entering into any particular examination of their nature and quality, and peculiar aggravations; nor does it at all regard the person by whom it is done, but considers that per-

fon only by whom it is to be crowned.

No man hath yet arrived to a due perfection in this grace, who is not content with any kind of tryal, from any hand whatfoever. The differences of friend or foe, of superior, inferior, or equal; of a good-natur'd and conscientious, or a wicked, perverse, vexatious man, are of no confideration at all, But, let the provocation be what it will, and come from whom it will, let it be offered but once, or repeated never so often, 'tis all alike. Because in all the over-ruling hand of God is attended to; and every thing received, as ordained and originally inflicted by him; and what proceeds from him is always good, and fure to turn to a profitable account, And, as nothing he appoints, though feemingly never so grievous, shall be to good mens disadvantage; fo nothing, though never fo flight and despicable in it felf, when dutifully and decently entertained, shall be passed over unrewarded. Arm thy felf therefore for combat, and decline no occasion of engaging that offers, if thou defireft the glory of the conquest. Without fighting thy way thro', there is no coming at the crown. And they, who refuse to suffer with Christ, do in effect, and by necessary consequence refuse to reign with him. Stand up then bravely to afflictions, and quit thy felf like a man. Repose and happiness is what thou covetest, but these are only to be obtained by labour.

bour. Victory and triumph are the things thou aimest at: but who was ever yet so absurd, as to think of triumphs without enemies and hardships,

or of conquering without a battle?

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Disciple.] I acquiesce, dear Lord, in all thou fay'st; nor will I indulge such vain imaginations. But fince even where the spirit is most willing, the flesh is miserably weak; affist me, I beseech thee, that by thy power and strength I may be able to do, what by my own I cannot accomplish, and even nature is averse from so much as attempting. Thou knowest full well, how little I can bear; how every shock makes my feeble heart give ground; Lord, do thou support and confirm me, that tribulation may appear, not only tolerable, but even defirable, in compliance with my will and my duty. For, what regret foever humanity may betray in these cases, when danger approaches; in my own better judgment, which confiders things in the christian and spiritual sense, I am abundantly satisfied, how much the harsher dispensations of thy providence conduce to my foul's advantage. And, tho' no chastisement for the present seems joyous, but grievous, yet my better sense, when I think freely, convinces me of thy wisdom and mercy, and that it is even good for me to be afflicted.

CHAP. XXII.

The infirmities and miseries of our present state.

DISCIPLE.

I WILL confess my unrighteousness unto the Lord, Psal. xxxii. and bewail my infirmities before him. For every trivial accident casts me down, and I am often overwhelm'd with forrow, upon occasions which my calmer thoughts abundantly convince me, deferve rather my contempt, than my ferious concern. Sometimes I fee and condemn my own folly; and fixed resolutions I make, how bravely I will behave my felf for the time to come; and yet, upon the next affault of fome Dight misfortune, this imaginary hero is beaten from his post, and cannot stand the shock of a very common difficulty. The poorest and most despicable events are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous temptations; and I, who at a distance defy them, yet, when brought to the trial, feel, by fad experience, upon how slippery ground I stand.

This is indeed the wretched condition of thy poor unstable servant: but, Lord, do thou, in compassion and mercy, look upon my frailty, for thou knowest it more perfectly than I my self can. Stretch forth thy hand, and draw me out of these deep waters, and out of this mire of sin and weakness, that I sink not in my corruption, Ps. lxiv. I cannot easily express the melancholy reslections, the shame and confusion, the indignation and sad perplexity of heart, which the consciousness of my own inability to resist temptations, and the inconstancy of my best and most vigorous purposes pro-

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duce; and, tho' my will be not always vanquished, nor do I (blessed be God) yield to every wicked suggestion; yet the repeated assaults of the enemy disturb my quiet, and I am weary of a life, which consists of continual hazard, and painful conslicts with my self. The wretchedness of my condition is but too manifest: I need no other argument to prove it; than that easy access evil thoughts find in my breast. Which, in despisht of all my watchful care, and most manful struggles, are much sooner infinuated, and received; than either driven

out, or prevented from entering again.

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Look down then, thou almighty rock of Ifrael, and lover of fouls, and interpose thy power and protection; give feafonable fuccour, and happy fuccess to my too fruitless endeavours. Arm and guard me with strength from above; and suffer not the old man, the corrupt inclinations of my flesh, which tefuses to be entirely subdued and brought to reason, to usurp any dominion over my better part. For this obstinate rebel renews its insurrections daily, and bids me battle; calls me to combats and hazardous engagements, which must never, never end in perfect peace and fafety, so long as this miserable state of mortality endures. Most miserable indeed! fince every action and accident of my life involves me in fresh dangers; since every step I take is upon fnares and precipices; fince every time and place is closely befet with troubles and toils, with treachery and temptation, and a numerous host of enemies ready to devour and swallow me up. For fatal uninterrupted fuccessions of trials every moment renew their attacks; and when I have happily vanquish'd many, and fondly promise my self a truce, as many Bb more

more immediately affault me, and make fiercer and more furious attempts upon fome other quarter, which I hoped had been fufficiently guarded from

their approaches.

And can a life, subject to such surprizes and hazards, embittered with fo many troubles and fevere trials, incumbred with fo much frailty and corruption, be valued and eagerly coveted? Nay, can that deferve the very name of life, which naturally breeds plauges and difeases, and exposes us to such variety of deaths? Yet inconfiderate man hugs, and embraces, and efteems it his only happiness; expects ease in the midst of distraction, pursues joys in a valley of tears, and vainly fets up for the boafted perfection of pleasure, in a condition of inevitable mifery, and lingring certain, pain. Sometimes indeed the tender sense of some afflictions cuts us to the heart, and in our melancholy moods, we give the world hard words; call it deceitful, treacherous, and vain; but even they who rail at it most liberally, and profess to hate and despise it, cannot be prevailed with to be content to leave it. The flesh and its affections have still a powerful influence, and spur men on to the pursuit and love of those very enjoyments, which reason and their own experience have taught them, cannot be worth their pains, nor in any degree answer their deluded expectations. For we must observe, that our love and hatred of this world proceed from very different causes and principles. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, I John iii. engage our affections; and these are ever present, and ever vehement with us. The calamities and griefs, and pains we feel, provoke our hatred and contempt, and represent life a burden and

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and mifery; and these have their intervals, and work upon us feebly and by fits. The former too strike in with inclination, and are affisted by Nature; the latter have no influence upon us, but what their own weight gives; all their impressions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and such as we

fubmit to, only because we cannot help it.

Thus sense and finful pleasure get within us, and, which is very lamentable, debauch our reason. The present pleasures of the body cheat the mind, and vitiate our palates to that degree, that, being prepossessed with a false taste of worldly sweets, we have no relish left for that delicious entertainment, with which God and religion delight and feast the pure and heavenly-minded foul. For, O! those happy men, who have learnt to despise and abandon earthly things, and confecrated themselves entirely to God, by mortification, felf-denial, and a steddy course of severe virtue; these exalted spirits know and feel the truth of God and his promifes; they find unspeakable joys and fenfible delights, in the voluntary refusal of those toys and baits, which cannot be had with fatisfaction, nor coveted with fafety. and despise, and pity, the folly of abused mankind; discover the lurking frauds of the tempter; and, that the imagined happiness, and boasted pleasures of fenfual and earthly men, are only fnares and dangers, vanity and cheat.

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CHAP. XXIII.

Of placing all our hope and happiness in God.

DISCIPLE.

REPOSE thy felf, my foul, in God, upon all occasions, and above all other dependances; for he is the only fure refuge, the eternal rest of the faints. Grant me thy grace, O sweetest, kindest faviour, to yalue, and love and trust in thee, above all things. Make me to prize thee far before health and beauty, to defire thee more than honour and worldly preferment, more than riches and power, more than wit and learning; to rejoice in thee more than in pleasure and prosperity, more than in reputation and praise, more than in the largest promises, the highest deserts, the most exalted gifts, the most transporting joys, which thou canst impart, or my heart when most enlarged, is able to receive. Let me admire thee above angels, and arch-angels, and all the host of heaven; above all things visible and invisible, more than all that is, or can be, which is not thy own most excellent self.

For thou, my God, art the best and most excellent being; in thee alone is plenty and fulness, sweet refreshment, peaceful comfort, and permanent delights; the perfection of beauty and endearing graces; true honour, and adorable greatness; in thee as in its proper center, all good meets, and dwells, and hath and doth, and will, continue to abide, from, and to all eternity. Give then thy felf, my dearest Jesus; for all thou givest, and all thou promisest to give besides, is poor and little, when compared with the presence and fruition of thee. And I have found,

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by long experience, that all thy other favours, nay, all nature is too short and bounded to satisfy my soul; whose unlimited desires exalt and stretch themselves far beyond all present enjoyments, and can be filled, and rest contented, with nothing less than thee.

O my beloved Lord, and king of the universe, knit me to thee with the bands of an entire and holy affection. Release me from this clog of earth, and give me wings of ardent zeal, and pure devotion, that I may mount aloft, and take my flight higher than heaven it felf, and find my rest in thee. Oh! when will that happy time come, when I shall be fet at liberty from fin and corruption, from this body and this world, and without interruption, without allay, and taste and feast upon the sweetness of my God? When will the necessary cares of this life cease to distract me, and leave me power and leifure to indulge those longings and pleasures, which refined and unbodied spirits feel; when swallowed up in the contemplation of thy divine excellencies, and even raifed above themselves, they know and love, and retire wholly into thee? At prefent I am oppressed with a load of infirmities and corruptions, and often groan under the Sense of my heavy burthen. The inward joys, with which thy grace supports me, are mingled and tinctured with pains and tears; which cloud, and darken, and deject my mind; diftract my thoughts, obstruct my eagerest wishes and endeavours, and fasten me down to earth and mifery, when I would fly to thy embraces. I can not in this vale of forrow enjoy my Lord, my love, as I could wish; but wait with hope, and long grievoully for that happy Change, which shall translate me to the fpirits of just men made perfect, and render

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my fufferings, and tears be lost; remember and commiserate present wretchedness, and grant my sighs an easy and effectual access into thy blessed presence.

Thou, Lord, art the brightness of thy father's glory; dart thy reviving beams into my foul; enlighten its dark place, and difipate its discomforts. To thee the very thoughts and inmost defires of every heart are known; by thee the most secret and filent wishes are thoroughly understood. O hear me, when I speak in this language, and pour out my supplications in fighs and tears which words cannot utter! Even when my tongue lies still, my thoughts are in exercife; and my heart within my breaft burns with inarticulate ejaculations. "How long (fay I to my " felf) how long will my Lord, my Bridegroom de-" lay his coming? O! that he would vouchfafe to " enter under the roof of his unworthy and afflicted " fervant! O that he would stretch forth his almigh-" ty hand, and deliver this wretch, just ready to " fink, out of all the mifery and trouble, which " furround, oppress, and are ready to devour him! " Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, for without "thee, no day, no hour, is easy or comfortable; " for thou art my hope, my joy, and all my worldly " plenty; but without thee is the very extremity of " poverty and discontent.

See how I lie in this prison of the flesh, fettered and bound up with the chain of my Sin, till the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose me, and the light of thy countenance, breaking into this darksome dungeon, assure me of thy favour and friendship. "Let others covet and set their affections upon such wretched objects, as deluded sense thinks valuable;

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"but, as for me, I will love and long for only thee, "my God. For thou, my God, alone, art my hope and happiness; the only stay of my present, and the only bliss of my future and eternal state. "Such is, and such shall ever be my address and fervent ejaculations; nor will I let thee go until thou blessest me; till thou inspirest new life with thy savour; and dwelless in, and converses familiarly with my soul, by thy spirit and gracious presence.

Christ.] Behold me here, my son, always attentive to thy prayers, always ready to extend the comfort and relief thou so zealously requestest. Thy tears and fervent desires, the sorrows of thy perplexed heart; and the strong cries of a wounded conscience, have pierced the skies, and brought me down to thy speedy succour and comfort; for I am ever nigh to such as be of an humble and contrite spirit, and am ready always to hear the prayers of

my fuffering fervants.

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Disciple.] I did indeed presume, in the anguish of my soul, to beg what I am sensible I cannot deserve, and slee to thee, my God, for help. And lo! I am sincerely disposed to forsake all and sollow thee. Nor will I ascribe to my self the glory of so zealous, so resign'd a temper: for thou, Lord, didst work this good thing in me, and, by thy own, thy preventing grace, kindle and excite my very first desires. I prayed, but thou preparedst my heart. I sought thee, but it was by thy impulse and direction. And for this sirst disposition, I return thee my most humble and unseigned thanks; acknowledging it thy best, thy sole gift, that I have been able so much as to think or intend any good thing. Since then the whole of what I do or desire well is thine, my part shall be

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to cherish every holy motion, to improve the early and happy affiftances of thy grace, to submit my self without any referve to thy holy guidance, and, in the midst of the very best performances thou qualifiest me for, constantly and humbly to remember my own vileness and impotence. For who, O Lord, is like unto thee? Or what in heaven or earth, which hath, or boafts of, any excellence, can be compared unto my God and Saviour? Thy works are just and true, thy precepts right and equitable, thy providence great and glorious, and all things are govern'd by it, after a most wise; and holy, and good and wonderful manner: All honour, and glory, and praise, be therefore ascribed to thee, eternal wisdom of thy eternal father: May heaven, and earth, and all the creatures, fet forth thy excellencies, and in this general concert I will join; my mouth shall fing thy astonishing works, thy great glories; and I will never cease to braife and magnify my God, while I have any being

CHAP. XXIV. A thanksgiving for God's mercies.

Disciple.

OPEN thou the eyes of my understanding, 0 Lord, that I may see and obey the wondrows things of thy law: give me the perfect knowledge of thy will, and possess me with a reverent and thankful sense of all thy goodness and loving-kindness to me and to all men; that I may shew forth thy praise, and publish thy mercies. I know these are so numerous and great, that I can never magnify them worthily: the least of them exceed my ability to express; and when I consider them,

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am so far from any vain pretence of merit, that all my thoughts are overpower'd and lost in wonder. For all our advantages of mind and body, of person and fortune, those which are endowments and ornaments of nature, and those which exalt and supply the defects of nature, are all the effects of thy bounty and beneficence; from whom every good and perfect

gift cometh, James i. 17.

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Thou art the common fource, the universal repository, from whence our benefits are derived. Not to all in equal proportions, 'tis true; but, be the measure less or more, 'tis still distribution, He who receives most is indebted for the whole to thy liberality; and he who hath least, could not have had that little but from thee. He to whom thou hast dealt thy bleffings most plentifully, is not from that dispensation to take an estimate of himself; his plenty will not justify any confidence or boast of his own merit, nor may he infult over his brethren, or behave himself indecently, and disesteem or despise those, from whom thy mercies have distinguished For the greatness of mens deferts is most eminently discovered, by a modest and mean opinion of themselves, courtefy and condescension to others, gratitude and devotion towards God. And the more they are sensible of their own wants and unworthiness, the better they qualify themselves for fielh and greater demonstrations of thy love and lierality. Again, the man to whom thou hast ditributed more sparingly, must not repine and be iscouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger portion his wealthier neighbour; but keep his eyes and hind wholly intent upon thee, and admire the freeom of thy grace, which, as it cannot be obliged

to any, fo gives to all largely, and without partial

respect of persons.

For thou art to be praised in all thy gifts by every man, because all comes from thee: and thou art master of thy own favours; thou givest without upbraiding, and with-holdest without injustice: thy wisdom knows what measures are proper and expedient for each person; and the reasons, why one man differs from another, lie not within the compass of our knowledge, but must be left entirely to thy judgment, to determine the fitness of them.

In this persuasion, Lord I readily acknowledge and adore thy mercy, in suffering me to want many of those advantages, which the generality of mankind set a mighty value upon. Nay, I am satisfied, that men ought to be afflicted, and humble their souls, with the consideration of their own wants and unworthiness; yet so, as not to give way to sad despondencies and distrust of thy mercy; but even from this very subject to draw matter of comfort and joy; because thou hast so particularly declared thy affection to the contrite and humble souls, and given them marks of more than ordinary savour.

Such were those apostles, so mean in their own and the world's esteem, whom thou madest choice of for witnesses of thy truth, and attendants upon thy person. These very heroes in the christian story, whom thou hast appointed judges and rulers of the whole world in matters of religion, were recommended to that high promotion, by being meek and poor in spirit, void of guile, and mortissed to the world; patient in suffering, content with insolence, and barbarous treatment; and proud of nothing, but being thought worthy to endure shame and pain for

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the name of Jesus. So distant from common men, so singular were their notions, which disposed them with joy and eagerness to embrace what others dread and detest, and shun with all their might and industry. The unexhausted spring of joy and comfort which they who truly love and fear thee, and are thankful for thy infinite goodness, find within, flows from the constant refignation of their minds to thy disposals, and the reflections upon thy wife eternal purposes, which check their proneness to partiality and discontent, and make every dispensation of thy providence welcome to them. They are degraded with equal fatisfaction, as others are exalted: and regard not high or low, honourable or despised, according to common reputation; but confider that their station and circumstances in the world are chosen and ordained by thee, and cannot therefore but be good, nay, better than any other, because they are the effect of thy divine appointment, which always knows and chuses the best.

Could we but once arrive at this confiderate temper of mind; the different accidents of life would cease to be either uneasy, or extravagantly pleasant. The violent shocks upon our passions would be effectually prevented; because thy honour would take place above our own appetites and mistaken interests. Poverty and shame would be acceptable, as coming from the same hand with riches and honour. And even those things which are most agreeable to the relish and inclinations of human nature, would please and comfort us more, with the consideration of their being bestowed by thee, the author of all our happiness; than upon the account of any benehts to be had from the things themselves. The

zeal for thy honour, in the extremity of distress, should support good men more, and find greater regard from them, than all the wealth, or glory, or other external bleffings, which here thou at any time dost or canst confer, upon the most prosperous of the sons of men. So small is the consideration of the greatest gift, in comparison of the wise, the good, the almighty giver and disposer of our fortunes; who orders all things for the best, and is, in all, our kindest friend, and constant benefactor.

CHAP. XXV.

The things which make for peace.

CHRIST.

HEARKEN to me, my fon, and I will inform thee in the right way to true peace and perfect liberty.

Disciple.] Be pleased, Lord, so to do; for such instruction will prove both acceptable and profitable

to me.

Christ.] Make it thy business rather to comply with the reasonable desires and commands of others, than to indulge thy own inclinations. Chuse a moderate, nay, a low fortune, rather than greatness and abundance. Be humble, obedient, and condescending in all thy behaviour. Let this be thy constant wish and prayer, that God would perform his pleasure, and dispose of thee and all thy affairs, as to him seems most convenient. The man that brings himself to this temper and spirit, be assured is in the ready way to peace of mind, and true contentment.

Disciple.]

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Disciple. The words my Lord hath spoken are few in number, but full of fense, and of very comprehensive extent; and I can easily discern in this little space the grounds of great perfection in virtue. Did I but diligently observe these rules, how happily would all excessive concern, and violent disorder at any accidents of human life, be suppress'd, or totally prevented? And if at any time hereafter I find my felf oppressed with immoderate cares or resentments, thy wisdom hath taught me to discover the true cause of my trouble; and, that I fuffer for neglecting to comply with this doctrine. But fuch compliance, Lord thou knowest, is not the work of nature and meer reason: and therefore I implore the powerful affistances of thy grace, to which nothing is hard, for making those improvements, which, in the prefent state of corruption, are to flesh and blood im-Nothing is more acceptable in thy fight than the conquest of our infirmities, and successful advances, in goodness. Put forth thy hand then, and what thou hast taught me to know, enable me to perform; that I may both approve my own obedience, and (what without thee I cannot do) invariably purfue my own happiness and salvation.

C H A P. XXVI.

A prayer against evil thoughts.

DISCIPLE.

GO not far from me, O Lord, my God, make baste to belp me, Psal. lxx. For corrupt imaginations are perpetually rising in my breast, and innumerable fears and Horrors close me in on every fide. The fense of my hazardous condition overwhelms

whelms me with Torment and deep distress, while I see the greatness of my danger, and the multitude of my enemies, but know not how to decline the

one or to fight my way thro' the other.

Christ.] Remember, son, my promise; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places strait; I will break in peices the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places. Isa. 14.

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Disciple.] Lord, fince thou hast applied those mystical words to my comfort, let me, I beseech thee, experimentally find the gracious accomplishment of them in my own person; and scatter all my dark and dismal, my vain and finful thoughts, by shedding the light of thy grace abroad into my heart. For in the extremity of grief and anguish, this is my hope and only support, that I may take fanctuary in thy goodness, to repose all my considence, and cast the burthen of my cares upon thee; to pour out my whole soul before thee, and wait with patience thy own good time, for succouring me in, and giving me a happy issue out of all my afflictions.

C H A P. XXVII.

A prayer for spiritual illumination.

DISCIPLE.

S HOOT forth, O bleffed Jesus, the bright beams of thy heavenly and eternal light, that it may enlighten all the dark corners of my heart, and effectually scatter every cloud of ignorance and error, which now hangs so thick over me. call home my wandring thoughts, and repel the temptations which so furiously assault me. Fight thou my hattles,

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 207 battles, and fubdue those fierce wild beafts, those brutish lusts, which range in this desert, and are ever striving to devour me; that by thy power the wilderness may be turned into a palace, and instead of the violent cries and howlings of raging paffions, no founds may be heard there, but fongs of praise. Thou Lord, who commandest the winds and the waves, and they obey thee, mark i. filence the storms within my breast; fay to that troubled sea, be still, and immediately there shall be peace and a profound calm, send out thy light and thy truth, and warm this barren foil; for fuch am I, till fructified and impregnated by the fun of righteousness. Pour down thy grace upon me plentifully, and water me with thy refreshing moisture, which like seasonable showers and gentle dew, may fatten my foul, enable it to bring forth generous fruit in great abundance. Raise and refine my mind, prest down the dross of earthly defires, and draw my affections up to heaven and heavenly objects; that a true relish of that bliss above may give me a difgust and loathing to all the nauseous pleasures here below. Deliver, or rather snatch me away with a holy Violence, from all the perishing comforts of this mortal state; for thirst of happiness I find is greater than any creature can either quench. or in a good degree asiwage. Unite me to thy self with the inviolable bands of holy love; fo shall my foul be fatisfied; for thou alone canst answer all my longings, and the whole world without thee is a trifle. and emptiness, and nothing.

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C H A P. XXVIII.

Against a busy inquisitive temper.

CHRIST.

Y fon, have a care of indulging a curious humour, and do not create to thy felf unnecessary troubles, by meddling with matters of persons, which are no part of thy concern. For what is this or that to thee? follow thou me. What have you to do with the virtues or vices, the conduct or the indifcretions of others; how they behave themselvs, what company they keep, or with what discourse they entertain one another? Why all this eager and intemperate zeal to vindicate or accuse them? Your shall not anfwer for their miscarriages, nor be one whit the hetter for their excellencies. Your own words and actions are the only things you will be called to account for. Therefore look well to them, and beware, left this bufy and malicious impertinence do not inflame that reckoning. Trouble not your felf to turn informer, and take not upon you to be a judge. Leave that to me. I know every man throughly, and nothing which is done under the fun can escape my observation and inspection. I am perfectly apprifed of each person's condition, see every action, nay, every intention, every defign; and not only what they do, but what they aim at. These things are far removed out of your fight; and therefore you cannot judge truly, if you might attempt it innocently. But know, once more, that judgment is my prerogative; and therefore it were impudence and usurpation in you to attempt it, if you were qualified to judge others. Study rather to

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be quiet; contain your felf within your own business; and let the prying, censorious, the vain and intriguing world follow their own devices. For all which they shall affuredly be one day summoned to a fevere account; for all their arts and specious pretences cannot impose upon me. Engage not with them in the same defigns, nor let the empty phantom of a great reputation, the pride of numerous and honourable relations or acquaintance, or the particular intimacies and friendships of celebrated perfons, engage your time and thoughts. These only ferve to distract and perplex the mind, and cheat you at last with fond expectations; they lead you into a labarinth, and there they leave you lost and bewildred. But I would shew thee the true way, and communicate my instructions freely, wert thou but at leisure to receive my fecrets, and careful to observe my motions; by opening the door when I knock, and watching all opportunities of entertaining me in thy heart.

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CHAP. XXIX.

Of lasting peace, and true goodness.

CHRIST.

HIS was my promise to my disciples heretofore, peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you, John xiv. But tho' peace be in every man's wishes, yet the qualifications and predispositions, necessary for procuring and preserving it, are the care of very few. My peace takes up its dwelling with the meek and humble. And the peace of my fervants confifts in steady patience; in attending diligently to my words. words, and following my directions. Therefore, upon every Occasion, be sure to make a conscience of what you do or say: let the pleasing me be your chief, your only concern; and the fruition of me your ultimate, your only, end and desire. Pass no rash censures upon other people's words or actions, and do not affect to be a man of business, or retailer of secrets; for this will be the best expedient to make your troubles sew and light. I say, sew and light; for to escape trouble altogether, and to have no affliction at all in mind, body, or estate, is not consistent with the nature of your present condition, but one of the privileges reserved for the

faints in heaven and immortality.

Do not therefore imagine, that you are in perfect peace, when you are fenfible of no calamity or diffurbance; or, that a present freedom from assaults is an argument that you have no enemies, and all is fafe and well with you; nor, when things prosper according to your heart's defire, that this is a proof of your extraordinary virtue and perfection; nor, if your zeal and piety be fervent, and your contemplations full of delight, conclude your felf a particular favourite of God. For these are foreign and deceitful inferences; fuch as neither prove the fincerity, nor the degree and perfection, of any man's virtue. This is discovered by quite different marks. The devoting and refigning your felf entirely to the will of God; not feeking your own, but his glory in every thing you do; confidering all events wifely, and receiving prosperity and adversity with evenness of temper; and fuch a brave unshaken perfeverance in goodness; as, even when the affiftances and encouragements of grace are withdrawn for a feafon,

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can resolutely go on, and harden itself to undergo yet sharper tryals with constancy; such lowlines of mind, as never puffs a man up with an opinion of his own merit, but in the severest distresses can find matter of praise and thanks for that mercy, which even then inslicts much less than he deserves to suffer, and a firm hope, that God will not forsake his servants: this is the way of peace, the way that leads to sure consolation and favour with God. And if, not to think highly of your own performances, you can add that other excellence, of despising yourself, and abhorring your own vileness, then be assured your peace is built upon so solid, so impregnable a foundation, that no mortal man here on earth is capable of attaining to it in greater perfection.

CHAP. XXX.

True freedom of mind.

DISCIPLE.

lity can aspire after, to abandon all worldly thoughts, and without interruption keep the mind upon the business of the Soul, and heavenly contemplations: to pass thro' a life thick set with cares and troubles, yet free and unconcerned. Provided still this unconcernedness proceed not from stupidity, heaviness of Apprehension, or slothful neglect; but from a generous liberty of soul, by which the man gets loose from all immoderate desires, and a too passionate love of earthly enjoyments. This faculty I earnestly covet, and beg thee O my God, to protect me against the cares of the world, lest the necessities of my body employ me too anxiously; and, under D d 2

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that pretence, my affections become enfnared, and fo I entangled in multiplicity of business, to the prejudice and neglect of better and weightier concerns; or, left I be enticed to fin by the delufive pleasures of sense, or discouraged from the steady pursuit of virtue and heaven, by too tender and afflicting refentments of any calamities which may befal me.

I speak not now of those vain superfluities, which the deluded world fo vehemently contend for; but beg to be preferved in these miseries and dangers. For miseries and dangers I cannot but esteem the common and unavoidable incumbrances of life; fince these are heavy, and cling close about the foul, and put it under fuch a strait confinement, that it cannot freely obey the dispositions it feels within, of getting above concern for the world, and fixing its defires and endeavours upon spiritual objects. Thou, O my God! art sweetness inexpressible. But, that my foul may truly relish thee, rather turn, I befeech thee, all my worldly comforts into bitterness, than fuffer them to vitiate my palate, and give a difgust to heavenly things, by any deluding charm of prefent pretended good. O! let not flesh and blood prevail in their conflicts with the spirit; let not the world and its fading glories cheat me into ruin; let not the fubtle enemy of fouls supplant me with his tempting delufions. Give me courage to refift, when called to the combat; patience to endure, when called to fuffering; firmness of mind to persist immoveably in my duty, when temptations and evil fuggestions endeavour to seduce me. Exchange, if it be thy Will, the transitory and false comforts of this world, for the oil of true gladness, the affistan-

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ces and fweet fatisfactions of thy bleffed spirit; and, instead of carnal love, and sensual inclination, let the love and defire of thee be diffused thro' my

whole heart, and reign there unrivall'd.

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Even food and raiment, and the necessaries by which life is fustained, are a grievance and obstruction to zealous and purified fouls. But what must be a burthen, let me not make an occasion of fin: by using the creatures intemperately, by a luxurious indulgence, or an inordinate appetite. Nature, I know, it is my duty to support; and therefore, entirely to refuse and neglect these provisions were sin and ingratitude. But to enlarge our defires beyond the proper uses of these things, and let them loose upon superfluity and vanity, delicacy and delight: this the law of God hath most wisely forbidden; because it were in effect to connive at all licentiousness, by cherishing the flesh, and animating and supporting it in insolence and rebellion against the spirit. Between these two extremes there lies a safe medium, in which I humbly implore the guidance of thy spirit; lest I decline from virtue on either fide, and, going aftray after my own inclination or unadvised zeal, forsake my path, and fly out beyond the measures thou hast prescribed for me.

CHAP. XXXI.

Self-love the greatest obstruction to virtue and bappiness.

CHRIST.

CON, if thou aim at purchasing all, know that it is not to be bought at any price less than thy all. Earth must be exchanged for heaven; and

I give myself, I expect the whole man without any reserves. Think not therefore of any private reservations of interest or pleasure, in bar to my entire possession; for all the world cannot do thee greater prejudice, than such-love. This sticks more close, while other things are loose and at a distance. And all things sasten upon thee, only according as the degree of thy own love and inclination for them gives opportunty and advantage. If your mind and its affections be pure, and sincere, and moderate, no-

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thing shall have the power to enslave you.

And what pretence can you have fuffering them to be otherwise; for who would set his love upon things, which cannot be obtained without difficulty, oftentimes not with it; or, if they be, cannot be enjoyed without danger? Who would court bonds and captivity, and be fond of having that, which will obstruct his weightiest concern, and rob him of his liberty? Were these considerations duly attended to, it would appear prodigious folly, for any man not to refign himself up entirely to me; to consume his strength with unprofitable vexations, and labour in the fire for vanity, and create troubles, which are in his power to avoid. Obey my will then, and fubmit all to my disposal, and then thou art out of the reach of the world and its temptations. but if interest and private respect still govern in thy heart, all thy applications will be in vain. thou runnest away from troubles in one place, to meet them in another; feeking rest but finding none, because thou always carriest thy torment about thee. For, even in thy most successful attempts, there will be somewhat wanting to give thee compleat fatisfaction; and in thy most private retirements thou wilt be disturbed and

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 215 and haunted by some crosses. The world, and its advantages, can do thee no real good by being en-

joyed, but by being slighted and despised. This is the case, not of riches only, but of honour and reputation too: for they also make themselves wings, and fly away; and thou canst never be safe or happy,

but by mortifying thy ambition and vain-glory.

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How many people please themselves with fond imaginations of ease and leisure to be good, in a country, or a college-life? But cloisters and deserts fignify nothing, without the zeal and disposition of an hermit. The convenience of place is very little; and all its boafted expectations vanish, except the man be changed, as well as his refidence, and manner of living. And this change is not, cannot be effected, unless his mind be fixed on me alone, as the proper, the only center of all its affections and defires. The liberty men enjoin otherwise, is very hort and unfaithful; for fresh occasions of sin and trouble will quickly offer themselves; and then not only the old inconveniences will return again, but new and greater, and fuch as are peculiar on that new hate of life upon which they have entred: And thus their very refuge becomes a fresh temptation,

CHAP. XXXII.

A prayer for purity of heart, and heavenly wisdom.

DISCIPLE.

Pfal. li. 11. that, being strengthned in the inner man, I may purge my soul from all vain anxiety, and banish idle fears, and get over the discourage-

ment and distracting troubles of the world. Let not the raging and impatient desires of any thing here, though never so alluring and seemingly valuable, perplex my thoughts, and draw me off from thee. Give me grace to consider my self, and all below, as things sull of vanity, and of very short continuance. For such indeed are all things under the sun, vexation of spirit, and altogether lighter than vanity it self. And he who stedsaftly looks upon them as such, is the truly, the only wise man.

Impart to me, then, O my God, I befeech thee, that heavenly wisdom, which may dispose me to feek thy kingdom and thy righteousness; to fell all I have for this one pearl of great price; and to esteem my self rich in no treasure but thee, Matt. xiii. to love and delight in thee alone; to take Satisfaction in all things else, only in such degrees, and in subordination to such purposes as thou hast appointed; and to receive every dispensation of providence, with fuch a Spirit and temper as becomes my duty, and may render it serviceable to the ends for which thou defigned it. Grant me such prudence and conduct in all my conversation, that I may decline and despise the infinuations of flatterers, and meekly receive the contradiction and reproaches of gain-fayers and flanderers. For this is wisdom indeed, when a man is not carried about with every blast of air; but stops his ears against the syren's charms; and refolutely proceeds in a straight steady course of virtue, in despight of all the subtilty of those who labour to entice, or the malice of them who would terrify, and drive him from it.

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CHAP. XXXIII.

How a christian ought to behave himself, when men Speak evil of bim.

CHRIST.

MY fon, if detractors and flanderers speak or think ill of thee, let not this disturb thee. The provocation to impatience and angry refentments, which fuch ill treatment usually ministers, will be much better employ'd against thy self. Take then this caution of improving thy humility, by reflecting how many things, which lie concealed from human fight, thy own mind is conscious of; and the more their wicked malice labours to lessen thy reputation, so much the less do thou appear in thy own esteem. If all be well within, and thy heart right with me, the impertinent censures of envious men will make no very deep impression. And when these reach thy ears, instead of recriminating and refentment, it will be wisely done to look up to me, and not to be disordered at any judgment, which men shall take upon them to pronounce concerning thee. For why should thy satisfaction be placed upon a thing, which makes thee not one whit the better or the worse? If they commend and cry thee up, thy real merit is not the greater; and if they revile and run thee down, thy innocence is not the less. Seek then true honour and satisfaction from me, from me alone; whose sentence never swerves from truth and equity. And great shall thy content and thy quiet be, if thou neither solicitously courtest the favour of men, nor servilely fearest their censure and displeasure. For, after all the complaints Ee of

of outward accidents, the true and original ground of all disquiet is within; for inordinate affections, and vain fears, are the polluted fountain from whence those bitter streams of discontent, and perplexed thoughts, and every confusion and disorder of a troubled mind proceed.

CHAP. XXXIV.

How God ought to be addressed to in time of adversity.

DISCIPLE.

THE Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord, Job i. 21. Yea, bleffed be thy name, for this very calamity, with which thy fatherly wisdom and affection hath now thought fit to chastise and try me. I cannot see from the scourge of thy rod; but I will fly to thee for fuccour; and beg, that thou would'st affist me with thy patience, and turn all my fufferings to my foul's advantage. I am indeed in trouble; and cannot but confess the present disorder, which this mis-fortune gives me. But this is my own infirmity; and I know not what to pray for as I ought, Rom. viii. 16. For what shall I say? Lord, save me from this bour. No, dearest father, thou hast not brought me to this hour, had it not been for thy glory, and my own good. And therefore I will rather beg, that my affliction may continue till thy gracious purpofes are accomplished in me; and, when thou feeft me fufficiently humbled, that then, and not before, thou would'st refresh, and raise, and deliver me out of it.

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For my deliverance, I am convinced, can come from no other hand; fince I my felf am weak, and poor, and blind, and know neither what is best, or what to do. Grant me then, bleffed Lord, a rescue in thy own due time; and in the mean while strengthen me with patience, that by thy powerful aid I may bear up against the sharpest tribulations without despondency or distraction. Not my will, Lord, but thine be done, shall be the constant language of my heart: my finful heart, which acknowledges thy mercy in the midst of wrath, and fadly reflects, that thou hast punished me much less than my offences deserve. O that this humble sense of my own guilt may work in me a fixed and contented submission to thy will, that I may neither unduly decline, nor unthankfully murmur at the weight or the length of my fufferings, till thou fee fit to compose this storm, and restore to me the comforts of thy favour and indulgent providence!

For, if the tempest still rage, this is not the effect of want of power in thee to calm it; but because a perfect calm is not yet seasonable for me. Thy powerful hand can lay it in a moment; thou canst abate its fury, or thou canst protect and support me under its violence and extremity. I know thou canst; for thou hast taught me by my own experience, and the remembrance of thy mercies will not fuffer me to doubt the efficacy of thy power. in proportion as my grief and burthen is greater, fo much the fweeter and more refreshing let thy healing virtue, and spiritual consolations be; and let me feel thy gracions promise, that thou will not suffer thy servants to be tempted above that they are able, but

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not iver wilt with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. x. 12.

CHAP. XXXV.

How the divine assistances should be sought, and depended upon.

CHRIST.

I AM that Lord, my fon, who is the strong hold of afflicted men in the time of trouble, and in whom thou dost well to take fanctuary, in all thy adversities, Nahum i. But, if thy comforts make not haste, thou dost thy self frequently obstruct and disappoint thy own expectations, by deferring thy prayers, and not hastening to ask relief. For men generally try all other comforts and remedies first, and referve me for the last refuge, in times of fuch extremity, when nothing will do them fervice; and then my honour is concerned, not only to defeat those human contrivances, in which they vainly trufted, but to defer my own fuccours; and, by making them fmart for their impious neglect, eompel them to acknowledge, that I am the deliverer of them that trust in me; and that without me no fuccours are strong, no counsels wife, no remedies successful. And, if their sufferings find some present abatement, this only skins the wound, but is no perfect cure; and the pain it affwages will return again with doubled anguish and rage. For I alone, who gave the stroke, can heal it; and, as there is no evil which the Lord hath not done, for neither is there any deliverance which the Lord hath not accomplished.

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But, now that thy applications are made to me, and thou hast cast thy felf upon my mercy, I will revive thy drooping spirits, and thou shalt, after this dark difmal ftorm, rejoice again in the light of my countenance. For I am ready, not only to reflore thy former happiness, but also to recompence thy past pains and patience, by plentiful additions of more and greater bleffings. And let not any adverfity, tho' never so grievous, prevail upon thy frailty to distrust my doing so. For, can there any thing be hard for me? Or am I like deceitful men, who footh their dependants up with promises, which they never design to perform? Have I at any time broken my word? Where then is thy faith, where thy courage? Bear up and with fortitude discharge thy duty. For, if thou fail not to qualify thy felf for receiving them, grace and confolation shall certainly approach in due time. If the Lord tarry, yet wait for him, for he will furely come Heb. ii. and heal thee. The Load. which now oppreffes thee, is only laid there, to try thy ftrength and virtue; nor would it so depress thee, if thy own folly did not make it heavier, by heaping on anxious cares for the future, upon thy present sufferings. But this is to conspire against thy felf, and turn thy own tormentor. Sufficient to each day is the evil thereof, Matt. vi. 34. without charging it with additional troubles, which no way appertain to it. These are indeed impertinent and fenseless at all times; for, how absurd is it to exalt or deject one's felf, by hopes, and fears, and fond and fearful representations of distant good and evil, which have not any being in nature, and probably may never be at all? Dismiss these empty but painful follies; the meer creatures of thy own fick imagina-

tions.

tions, For fuch delusions are a great reproach upon reason, and a greater yet upon christianity; when thy mean timorous soul is mocked by such airy phantoms, and so very easily led captive by the enemy's suggestions. And such are these desponding or sanguine thoughts of what will be hereaster. Whether it be or not, he matters not; for his business is to deceive and undo men. And true or false hopes and terrors contribute equally to this design. The love of present good, and dread of approaching evils, are instruments of ruin employed by him, with wonderful address; and, if ruin be but the consequence, the methods and management of it are

altogether indifferent to him. Do not therefore fuffer fear to deject thee, but still maintain thy christian courage, and place all thy confidence in my mercy. I am always ready at hand, when thou supposest me at distance; and, at those times, when all is given for gone, things are fo far from desperate, that prosperous events and most surprizing comforts are breaking in upon thee, like a glorious sun from an astonishing eclipse. 'Tis rashness therefore to conclude affairs in a lost condition, because some crosses have thwarted your expectations: nor can either thy own refentment of misfortunes within, or the violence of any calamity without, give thee fufficient grounds, from the terrible appearance thy present circumstances have to pronounce, that all hope of escape and better days are past. Nay, which is the most fensible most deplorable case of any, if at the same time that I scourge thee with outward calamities, thou feelest the inward supports of my grace withdrawn, which should enable thee to bear the rod; yet even fo, think not thy felf forfaken,

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 223 saken, or that I have totally cast thee from my pre-

sence. The way to heaven is set with briars and thorns; and they, who arrive at the kingdom, travail over craggy rocks and comfortless, deserts: and more it is for their advantage to have their virtue awakened, and brightned, and brought to the test, by the smart of Adversity; than that all things should go smoothly on, without any manner of let or

molestation.

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The heart of man is deceitful, who knows it? Thy very felf art often under very dangerous mistakes about thy own condition. Thou art ignorant what thou art, and much more ignorant what is fit for thee. But I, who have a perfect understanding of both, see plainly, that it is proper and beneficial sometimes to be left to thy felf; that thus struggling to so little purpose with the calamities that bear thee down, thou may'ft be brought to a just and humble sense of thy infirmities; that this fense may check thy vanity, and shew, that all thy attempts which prove successful, are owing entirely to another hand; and thou art in truth much, very much less than that mighty man thou art apt to take thy felf for. This makes my depriving thee of thy usual comforts convenient, but still 'tis in my power to restore and augment them to thee, when I fee convenient.

Nor think me hard and unjust in these dispensations; for who shall forbid me to do what I will with my own? I gave thee what thou couldst not claim; and I take away what thou hast no right to keep. For every good and perfect gift is mine, and not a debt but a favour, James i. 17. If then Affliction comes, remember 'tis of my sending; and I, who laid the cross, can both remove and recompence it:

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224 Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

I kill and make alive, I bring down to the grave, and raise up from it: I Sam. ii. And, in the instant that I lay my thunder by and smile again, thy heavi-

ness shall be changed into joy unspeakable.

In all my dealings I am just, in all wife, and good; and deserve not only thy admiration, and attention but even thy thanks and praise. Could'ft thou but rightly comprehend my methods, and the fecret reasons of them, thou would'st drink up the bitter potion with Joy; upon this very confideration, that I do not spare thee to thy hurt, but send afflictions in pure kindness to thee, when I foresee they will be for thy advantage. Observe the tenure of my gracious promise to my best beloved disciple: as my father loved me, even so have I loved you John xvi. But both my father's love to me, and mine to them, was express'd, not by false and transitory Joys, but by sharp and long conflicts; by being called, not to honours, but to reproaches and difgrace; not by indulging them in ease and floth, but by inuring them to trials and difficulties; by calling them, not to rest and peace, but to bring forth noble and generous fruit with patience. Remember well these words, my fon, and then thou canst not think much to drink of the cup that I drank of so deeply, and to be baptized with the baptism that I was baptized with. Thou canst not then despair, or think, that God, in afflicting thee, hath abandoned all care and concern for thy benefit; fince even that tender, that unparallel'd, that unconceivable affection, with which he loved his own dear fon, hindred not his making that very captain of thy salvation perfect through sufferings, Heb. ii. And what art thou? What is the

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the best of men in comparison of him? What are thy agonies and tryals, the very worst of thine, in comparison of his?

CHAP. XXXVI.

Of seeking God alone.

DISCIPLE.

HY mercy, Lord, is great, which hath thus far enabled me; but still, I feel I want a larger portion of thy grace, which may conduct me with fafety to fuch a state of perfection, as may fecure and fet me at liberty, from all the obstacles which the creatures lay in my way. For, so long as I retain an affection or concern for any thing in this world, I find my foul check'd and restrained in her flights to thee and heaven. How often do I make the prophet's wish my own, O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest? Lo, then would I get me away far off, Pf. ly, and remain at a distance from the world. Now what is more at ease, more abstracted from the world, than a true fingle-hearted honesty? What can boast of freedom equal to his, who covets nothing upon earth? All created beings should indeed be passed over, and left behind in this slight; and a man must make a stretch even beyond himself, and abandon his own natural inclinations and defects, in order to get a distinct view of the creator, and those perfections in him, to which no creature bears any resemblance. Now this is the very reason, why so lew employ their thoughts in heavenly contemplations with any fenfible delight; because when they tempt it, they do it unskilfully; by not divesting Ff themselves

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themselves of those worldly affections which damp

and difgust them in the undertaking.

It is not, I confess, an easy matter, nay, 'tis not possible for slesh and blood, by its own strength, thus to purge the affections. Nothing less than a liberal and very powerful inspiration of divine grace can thus exalt the mind, and, as it were, carry the man out of himfelf. But, till fuch exaltation of the foul hath difengaged him from all temporal interests, and fix'd down his defires to that one object worthy of them, God himself; all his knowledge and imagined excellencies are very little worth. For, whatever false notions of honour and greatness men may delude themselves with, yet, still all such have poor and little fouls, who dote upon that which ought to be disdained, and allow any thing, besides the infinite and eternal God, a very honourable place in their esteem and affections. For all which is not God; is vanity and nothing, and ought to be nothing regarded. How vast a difference is there between the wisdom of a mortified pious man, enlightened from above; and the pompous learning of a profound and studious divine? That knowledge, which descends from above, speaks its heavenly original, by marvellous and noble effects; and works a greater change in the man, a greater improvement in profitable knowledge, than all that comprehension, which the best capacities, and the most indefatigable industry, can ever attain to.

We often hear very glorious characters of divine contemplation, and the wonderful delights and transports attending it; and these a great many appear very fond of. But when they have no regard to the necessary preparations for it; their minds are full of

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

sensible Idea, and possess'd with the things of this present world; and the subduing and mortifying their defires and passions is a matter they take not sufficient care about. And, while their affairs continue in this posture, they are in no degree qualified for those exercises of the mind. Methinks it is a most unaccountable folly, and argues, that men forget what spirit they are of, when they call themselves christians, i. e. spiritual persons, that have folemnly renounced the world, with its vanities, and the flesh, with its finful lusts; who profess to believe and to feek happiness in a future state, and to place that happiness in the perfection of their souls; and yet, in reproach and contradiction to those professions, fuffer body and fense to run away with them; lay out themselves entirely upon perishing and paltry advantages, while the substantial and everlasting are wretchedly neglected, and their fouls fo perfectly forgotten, that they scarce afford one serious thought to this most important concern, Or, if at any time they fet themselves to think, some trifle presently interrupts and withdraws their mind from any prostable recollections. Nay, they themselves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a severe examination into their own state; which is sure, if diligently purfued, to present them with objects of shame and forrow, fuch as will wound their thoughts and foon make them weary of this necessary work. Thus we never trouble our selves to observe which way our inclinations are disposed, or whither they tend; nor do we feriously bewail the abominable impurity of our one Hearts, though there be nothing but impurity there. The way of all Flesh is corrupt upon the Earth; And that universal corruption, saith the scripture, Ff2

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fcripture, brought a flood to destroy mankind and every creature. But whence, do we think, proceeds such corruption of manners? From the corrupt affections of men, no doubt. For, if this fountain be not sweet, the action, which is but a stream and emanation from it, must of necessity be bitter and impersect. For a pure heart is the ground-work of a holy life; and as naturally springs from it, as the fruit from the tree.

And herein we are greatly blameable, that so little regard is had to the dispositions of the heart; without which no true judgment can ever be made, either of our felves or others. But this, which is in truth of greatest consequence, the very point upon which a man's whole character turns, feems to be laid afide, as a thing too nice and speculative to be very curious about. We fix our eyes upon the outward action, confider what, or how much a man hath done; but with what fincerity, with what zeal, with what honest intention he did it, or whether with none of all these qualifications, we trouble not our selves to make strict enquiry. So again, for the estimate we make of persons, they are all foreign from the true and proper foundation of merit and respect. The riches, valour, beauty, judgment, wit, eloquence, a good style, or a sweet voice, or a skill of management in town or country-business, his preferments, or his profession, these we immediately take care to be informed of, and proportion our value and respects accordingly. But a man's humility and poverty of spirit, his meekness and patience, his devotion and piety, these are seldom mentioned in the character, or recommended as mo-tives to induce our regard. Thus nature and grace have

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have their different prospects and affections. The former looks at the outside of a man, and values him according to things that are not his; the latter places all within, and sets little or no value on external ornaments and advantages. The former builds upon a salfe foundation, seeks her self what she esteems in others, and is oftentimes deceived and disappointed: the latter reposes her whole hope and love in God, and is neither mistaken, nor deluded by salse expectations.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Of Self-denial.

CHRIST.

Thou hast first attained to such a mastery, as entirely to subdue, and deny thy self. For covetous persons, and lovers of themselves, the lustful, and busy, and unsettled men, the lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, are all slaves; vile and unprositable slaves; condemned to fruitless and endless toil; seeking what they cannot find, and contriving what they cannot compass; or if they could, what they cannot long enjoy. For every thing, which is not of God, is soon brought to nought. Observe this short, but certain, Aphorism: Forsake all, and thou shalt sind all. Let go defire, and thou shalt lay hold on peace. Consider this rule diligently, and put it in practice, for practice will explain and prove it to thee.

Disciple.] This, Lord, is not the work of a fingle day, a maxim not fitted for weak capacities, but such fuch, as in one short sentence contains the utmost

perfection of a pious and refigned christian.

Christ. And why, my son, should that perfection affright or discourage thee? Call up thy zeal, aspire to true greatness of soul, and, the nobler the virtue is, the more eager and generous refolution do thou express of attaining to it. Oh! that thou wert of that happy disposition, which utterly discards all narrow and felfish considerations, and submits itself entirely to the obedience of my commands, and the disposals of my providence! so should thy person and thy behaviour be acceptable to thy God; fo should'st thou enjoy great fatisfaction, and peace in thy own breast. Alas! there are still many things, which must be abandoned; many, which till thou hast facrificed to me, the happiness thou aimest at, can no ver be obtained. Buy therefore of me the pure refined Gold of a heavenly and refined disposition; for that shall make thee rich, above all the treasures of this world, Cast off the wisdom of this generation, and do not flatter thy felf with their foolish imaginations: for they pursue shadows, and take delight in vanity and nothing. Remember I have told thee, that the things which are lightly esteemed, must be purchased at the expence of those, which this world esteems most precious. For, what is more despised and mean in common reputation, what more neglected and forgotten, than that true heavenly will dom, which renounces all merit of its own; and is content to be difregarded by the men of this world! This mortified and humble state of mind is what indeed some people profess, and in words commend; but their practice evidently condemns it, and gives the lie to all their diffembled applauses. And yet

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of the Imitation of Jesus Christ. 231 this wisdom, poor and despicable as it appears to common eyes, is that pearl of great price, for which all other possessions are wisely given in exchange: Matt. xiii. That hidden treasure which is always likely to continue hid, fince it lies low, and sew either do, or care to, find it.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

The Changeableness of our Temper, and how to fix it.

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Do not, my fon, depend upon any present disposition of mind, with which thou feelest thy felf affected, for this is fickle and of short duration. Variety and change is what Men must be subject to. lo long as they carry the frailties of flesh and blood about them; and all their endeavours cannot fo fix their hearts, as to keep them constantly the same. fometimes they find themselves disposed to mirth, fometimes to melancholy; now they are calm and ferene, by and by all over disorder and confusion; this hour fervent and devout, the next lukewarm and cold; studious and industrious to day, slothful and unfit for business to-morrow; serious and grave, and thoughtful now; aud anon again, gay trifling, and s light as air. But the truly wife man, who is acted by the spirit of God, gets above this mutable region of the lower world. He suffers not himself to be carried about with every blast and impulse of inconfancy, but settles upon the basis of the one excellent and, which is always first and most in his thoughts, be port to which he makes, and the compass by which he steers all his defigns and actions. For his method it is very possible for a man to con

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

unshaken unmoved, by any gust of inclination from within, or accident from without, The natural changeableness of human affections, being yet more improved by mens own voluntary uncertainty, and proposing no constant end or rule to themselves. Now that intention, which fixes upon God as its only end, will keep men steady in their purposes; aud deliver them from being the sport and scorn of fortune. And this in scripture is stilled a fingle eye, because it ever

looks and aims but at one. Object.

The more intent then that eye is in this prospect, the less diverted from its mark, the firmer and more confistent men are with themselves: and the less Impression does any change of wind or weather make upon fuch diligent and wife pilots. But still infirmity prevails in most: and, if some pleasure or profit come betwixt, they retain so much tenderness for themselves, and their temporal advantages; as to be diverted from the same vigorous pursuit of their first prize, and allow this fresh one a part at least of their endeavours and defires. They love God, but they would love the world too; and in this state of divided affections somewhat resemble the Jews; who, as the Evangelist observes, John xii. o. came to visit Martha and Mary at Bethany, not only that they might see and hear Jesus, but that they might satisfy their curiofity in beholding Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. It must therefore be your chiefest care and business, to compose this distraction of thought, to fix your heart to one purpose, to seek one good, one end, so zealously, that nothing else may come into competition or partnership with it: to look upon every thing which diverts you from, or cools you in this pursuit, with an eye of Disdain; and

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of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 233 and constantly to keep your hope, and desire, and love (which are the spring and guide of all your actions) upon me alone.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The happiness of them who love God.

DISCIPLE.

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N having God, I have all things. For whom can I have in Heaven but Thee, and what is there upon earth that I can defire in comparison of thee? Pfal. lxxiii. Oh fweet and comfortable words! but this is a fweetness which none can relish, but they who love the word of God, and not the world, neither the things that be in the world. I John ii. 15. My God to me is all; I need no more to be added. The men of purified understandings find this enough, and they of purified and heavenly affections cannot too often repeat it. When thou art present, affliction and death are pleafant; for in thy favour is life and joy. When thou art absent, life it self is a burthen; for thy displeasure is worse than death. Thou makest a merry heart and a chearful countenance, in thee is abundance of peace, and a continual feast. Thou givest me right notions of all events, and rendrest every accident an occasion of joy and praise to me. Without thee prosperity itself is nauseous, and lloath my very mercies. For nothing here below an please our palate, unless thy favour and wisdom give it a grateful relish. To him that feeds delightally on thee, every bitter morfel is fweet; but they who want or flight that heavenly entertainment, find he most delicious dainties bitter and disagreeable.

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They, who are wife for the world and the flesh are most defective in the true and heavenly wisdom The carnal wisdom ends in guilt and death, and the worldly wisdom pursues vanity and empty pomp, But they, who are wife indeed, conform themselves to thy example, by a contempt of all earthly great. ness, and a vigorous mortification of their fenfual appetites and paffions; they disdain the shadow, and lay hold on the substance; pass from falshood to truth, and from body to spirit. These are the men, who love and delight in God; and find no fatisfaction in the creatures, farther than as they promote the honour, and ferve the purposes, of their great The joys they administer are subordinate and limited: not inherent and natural, but by reflection only; and every thing is esteemed, in proportion as it tends to its maker's use and praise. So very unlike, so infinitely different, is the pleasure we fed from the creator and the creature; from the bound less ocean of eternity, and the narrow tract of time; from the original felf-existent Light, and those faint beams shot down on things here below.

Shine then, O light everlasting, in comparison whereof, all created lights are but a less degree of darkness. Convey thy self into my benighted soul, purge and dispel the clouds of error there, purify my polluted affections, cheer my sadness, enliven my stupid mind and all its faculties; that I may rejoid and triumph, and bask in thy bright beams. O when will that happy, that long wished for hour approach, when I shall be filled with thy lustre, and fatisfied with thy presence, and my God be my all in all? For sure I am, till that blessed time, my joys are and will be impersect. I feel, alas! I see

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and lament in my felf, some remains of the old man fill. Scourged he is, but not entirely crucified; wounded and bruised, but not quite dead. My flesh, in despight of all my painful labours, continues to lust against the spirit; and a domestick war distracts and breaks the peace and good government of my mind. This cannot exercise its just dominion without incessant broils and tumultuous infurrections. But, O thou, who rulest the raging of the sea, and stillest the waves thereof, when they arise, come speedily to my affistance, and suppress this Storm. Scatter my enemies that delight in blood, and beat them down, O Lord, my defence. Exert thy mighty power, and get thee honour by this conquest. For thou, O Lord, my God art my only hope and helper: O fave me, or I perish.

CHAP. XL.

This life is a state of continual temptation.

CHRIST.

DO not suppose, my son, that in this world thou ever canst be in a condition of absolute lafety. Dangers and enemies befet thee every where. Violence and stratagems are perpetually employed for thy ruin; and therefore the weapons of thy spiitual warfare must never be laid aside; for useful they are, and always necessary, during this state of mortality. Cover thy felf then with the shield of wisdom and faith; for, if thou expose thy person without this defence, the fiery darts of the wicked will quickly gall and wound thee. And, if dexerity and diligence in the use of thy arms be not nimated by a mind fixed intirely upon me, and a

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vigorous resolution of enduring the worst that can happen for my fake; the engagement will be found too hot, and that crown of the bleffed, which is the reward of perseverance, can never belong to thee. Call up thy courage then, and exert thy utmost strength, as occasions of combat shall offer. For to him that overcometh will I give the hidden manna; Rev. ii. but mifery and destruction are the portion of faint-hearted and feeble, unactive and fleeping foldiers.

If then, these are the conditions of thy obedience and reward; think how abfurd it is for them who indulge their Ease here, or expect peace and happiness hereafter. In one of the two states enduring must be thy lot; and therefore durable patience, and not foft repose, is what thou should'st labour for at present. For rest and undisturbed content have now no place on earth, nor can the greatest affluence of worldly goods procure them, but their dwelling is in heaven only, and they are peculiar to the love and fruition of God alone. In obedience to his will, you should contentedly undergo labour and toil, tryals and troubles, diffress and anguish of heart, poverty and want, infirmities and diseases, injuries and affronts, scandal and reproach, disparagement and difgrace, punishment and torture. These whet and brighten a christian's virtue, exercife and distinguish him. These thorns are woven into wreaths of glory; and to such faithful servants I repay for their short hardship an endless recompence; and, for the shame, which is presently forgotten, laurels that never fade, crowns always bright, and honours firm and immortal, as my own.

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These are the difficulties of the present state, which men are to be upon their guard against from But alas! they must not hope always to enjoy peace and fatisfaction within. No, even the faints of old, whose purer innocence and eminent virtues might better entitle them to this tranquility, yet often found occasion to complain, that their heart was disquieted, their spirit desolate, and an borrible, dread overwhelmed them, Pf. lv. cxliii. Doubts and scruples, temptations and fears, and piercing perplexities of heart, are frequently the lot of the most excellent persons. But in all these streights the good behave themselves with meekness and patience, repoling their confidence in God, and humbly diftrusting themselves, are supported with the hopes of divine grace and favour, to comfort and affift them; and with the confideration, that the fufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them. This was the case of those glorious saints, who are thy patterns. And, what pretence canst thou have, to hope for that joy at present, which they waited long for, and purchased at the expence of severe pains and many tears, and great difficulties; and thought themselves well paid, even thus? Wait then thy master's leifure, quit thy felf manfully, banish impatience and distrust, persevere in faith and good works; grudge not to lay out person, life, all, for the service and glory of God; and doubt not, but I will one day abundantly reward, and in the mean time I will stand by thee to sustain and deliver thee in every danger and calamity.

CHAP. XLI.

Of despising the vain censures of men.

CHRIST.

MY fon, repose thy foul upon God, cast all thy care there, and let it be thy great and only concern, to approve thyself to him. When this is done, a man should not much regard what the world thinks of him, nor fear the censures of others : while his own conscience bears testimony to his piety and and innocence. To be ill thought of, is sometimes for thy good; it conforms thee to the image of thy faviour; and if thy foul, like his, be meek and humble; if thou feek not thy own glory, but his that fent thee; the affliction will not be very grievous to be born. The opinions of men are as many and as different as their persons; the greatest diligence and most prudent conduct can never please them all, And therefore even St. Paul himself, than whom none ever laboured more to recommend his actions to the good acceptance of the world; He who became all things to all men, I Cor. xi. yet found it necessary to appeal to a higher court, and declared it a small thing with him to be judged of man's judgment, I Cor. He did his utmost to promote the interest and falvation of others; but even the utmost he could do, was not fufficient to skreen him from the invective censures, and perverse misconstructions of men. And therefore he removed his cause, and referred the whole matter to that God who knew his integrity; and defended himself against the calumnies and reproaches of licentious tongues, with great humility and invincible Patience. Sometimes he heard and paffed

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passed their slanders by in silence: at other times he vindicated his own innocence, and reproved the unreasonable malice of his accusers: not so much in tenderness to his own honour, as to prevent an offence which might be taken from his forhearing to do fo; and left the weak and ignorant should conclude, that too obstinate a filence was an argument of

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But what is there fo terrible in the condemnation of man? For what indeed is man? He lives and flourishes to day; but to morrow he is gone, and his place shall know him no more. Fear God then, and his judgment; for this is omniscient and everlasting; and the more thou fearest him, the less thou wilt be afraid of any but him. Confider well what hurt can come to thee by injurious and reproachful treatment. Alas! they who accuse and blacken thee injuriously, are much the greatest sufferers by their own malice and injustice. Their Slanders and Detractions can have no influence, can make no impression upon the righteous judge above. None to thy prejudice, but a fad and fatal one to their own. For they cannot escape his judgment, who hath declared, that they who judge shall be judged; that they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy; and that the same measure they mete to others, he will measure to them again, Matt. vii. I Pet. iv. Keep God then always in thy mind, and let go quarrel and contention, nor embroil thy felf in troubles and differences, by being over-folicitous in thy own If thou at present seem to be oppress'd with difgrace and ill reports, which thou hast not deserved; bear them contentedly. Blemish not thy innocence by too deep a refentment; nor take off from

from the brightness of thy crown, by anger and impatience, and eagerness to right thy self. Reslect on me, who once endured such contradiction of obstinate and implacable sinners; and am now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, Heb. xii. Look up to heaven, and remember, there is one, who can make thy innocence as clear as the light, and thy righteousness shine as the sun at noon-day, Psal. xxxvii. One, who will consider, not only thy infamy and wrong, but thy manner of bearing it; and, the more meek, and more injured thou hast been, the kinder and more bountiful rewarder thou shake be sure to find me.

CHAP. XLII.

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A christian must devote himself entirely to God, before he can be happy.

CHRIST.

Lose thy life, and thou shalt find it. For sake thy self, and thou shalt possess me. Esteem and have nothing, and thou shalt enjoy all things. For I will recompence thee with greater treasure, and infinitely increase thy store, when thou hast made over into my hands all that thou hast and art.

Disciple.] How often, Lord, must I repeat this Gift; and what are the instances wherein I must for-fake my self?

Christ.] All times, my son, are seasonable? and every action, every accident of thy life, surnishes a fresh and proper occasion for so doing. I can admit of no reserves, but expect thee stript of all, and nothing left which I have not a title to. For how canst thou be mine, and I thine, except thy own will be renounced

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renounced in every thing, and no property of claim any longer remain unconveyed over? The fooner thou executest this deed, the better it will be for thee; and the more full and express, the more frank and fincere thou art in it, the more favourable will be my acceptance, and the more valuable confideration shalt thou receive. Some indeed there are, who pretend to give themselves; but the conveyance is so clogged with proviso's and limitations, that the title they make is worth nothing. They trust themselves to God by halves, and are for making their best of the world at the fame time. Others again do this without exceptions; but then in difficulties and temptations they repent of their bargain, and revoke the grant. These men make no considerable improvement in virtue, nor do they taste the sweets of piety; which confist in a mind at large from the world, and the friendship and familiar conversation of God. But such spiritual advantages cannot, in the nature of the thing, be imparted to any whose affections are not intirely agreeable, and inseparably united, to mine. And this requires the total refignation of a man's felf; and the daily offering of his whole fpirit and foul and body, a holy, lively and reasonable Sacrifre unto me. I have often faid it, and now repeat it once more, that he who would receive all, must in exchange give all. Do not then expect, or call in, any thing again; but give freely and chearfully, and depend folely upon me without doubts or delays. Me thou shalt have in return, and with me perfect freedom and faving knowledge. Prevail with thy felf to give up all, without intent or power of revocation; and pray earnestly, that thou may'st gladly follow Christ in all his sufferings and lowest state; Hh

that thou may'st renounce all property, and throw thy self naked into his embraces; that thou may'st die to the world at present, and by so soing, live to me for ever. When this is done, all vain imaginations will be banish'd; lust will disturb thee no more, nor passions russle, nor anxious cares perplex thee; excessive fears will withdraw themselves; inordinate desires will slacken and die; sorrow and disquiet find no place; and if temptation try, yet can they not molest thee.

CHAP. XLIII.

How to govern one's self in the affairs of the world.

CHRIST.

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B E sure, my son, to take good heed, that business and care never get within thee; but whatever constraint they may lay upon thy actions, and outward attendance; yet keep thy mind always at its own disposal. Do business, but be not a slave toit; and remember, thy prerogative is, to govern, and not to ferve, the things of the world. Thou art a Hebrew of the spiritual seed of Abraham; affert thy native liberty. But why do I call thee a free-born fon of Abraham? Thou art a great deal more, translated out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the fons of God, partaker of the inheritance of the faints in light, Col. 1. Such birth, fuch a condition should raife and enoble thy foul, trample upon the present, and grasp at nothing less than eternity. Cast only now and then a disdainful glance upon this world, as a thing by the by; but keep thy eye immoveable and directly fixed upon heaven, as thy fure prospect, and

and thy main concern. It will not become thy quality to dwell upon trifles, or subject thy self to things temporal. These thou must make subservient to thy pleasure, submit and serve thy occasions. For so the great creator intended they should, who is the author and lover of order, and would have every work of his contain'd within its proper post and station.

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If thou at any time art entangled in difficulties, rely not upon human prudence, nor trust the false representations, with which thy senses and worldly affections, or the mistaken judgment of others so disposed, would impose upon thee. But remember Moses, and go with him into the tabernacle to ask counsel of thy God, Exod. xxxiii. There thou shalt often meet a proper answer, have many thoughts seasonably suggested to thy mind and return wiser, both for this and the next world, than thou wert before. For Moses always took this course in doubtful cases and important exigences: he made prayer his weapon and refuge, by it he vanquished many dangers, the malice of enemies and wicked men escaped, detected their devilish designs, and retorted the misthiefs they intended, back upon their own heads. Now what that tabernacle was to him, thy closet and thy conscience are to thee. Neglect not then by any means to confult this oracle, and implore the ditections and affiftances of divine grace. For the ill confequences of acting according to thy own will without these precautions, are intimated to thee, by that instance of Joshua and the Israelites: who are expresly said to have been deceived by the Gibeonites, to their great detriment, because they gave too easy tredit to their flattering fair pretences, and engaged in league without first enquiring of the Lord, Josh. ix. Hh 2

CHAP. XLIV.

Against too great eagerness in business.

CHRIST.

MY fon, commit thy affairs to my care, and I will in due time bless them with a proper, and profitable issue. But wait with patience till that appointed time of mine comes, and do not anticipate the methods of my providence; for I know how to

convert every delay to thy advantage.

Disciple.] Lord, I most willingly commit my concerns to thy management, for all that little I am capable of doing, is very insignificant. And therefore I cannot but wish, that this sense, to how little purpose all my own pains and contrivances are, might free me from anxious thoughts concerning suture contingences, and dispose me determinately to ac-

quiesce in thy wife and good pleasure.

Christ. Alas! my fon, eager and greedy men covet they know not what. An object at a distance engages their defires; while they see only the fair and glittering fide; but, upon closer and more diftinct view, enjoyment undeceives them, and they grow fick, even of their own defires. For their own defires are various and mutable, and ever turning about to some fresh object. It is therefore of some consequence, for a man to forego his own inclinations, even in matters of no great importance. But he who hath attained to the faculty of doing this in any case whatsoever, is truly free, and great, above the reach and envy of fortune, and at the highest pitch of human perfection. Yet even this man will find his virtues called to the test: for the old

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old enemy of fouls is ever framing some stratagem to undo good men, and lies in ambush night and day, to catch an opportunity of enfnaring unwary fouls. Let then his diligence excite yours, and be not less affiduous to save, than he is to destroy you. For this is the purport of thy Lord's command: Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, Matt. xxvi.

CHAP. XLV.

In man dwelleth no good thing.

DISCIPLE.

TORD, what is man, that thou art mindful of bim, or the son of man, that thou visitest bim? Pfal. viii. How can he deferve to be affifted by thy grace, or fuccoured by thy favour? What right have I, fo vile a wretch, especially, to complain unto my God, if he withdraw his presence, and leave me to my felf? Or, if I beg and pray for comforts, what have I to alledge in my own behalf? How can I take it ill, if he rejects my petitions? This I am sensible is all I ought to think, or can pretend to fay, That I have nothing, and am nothing, and in my own nature incline to and purfue after vanity and nothing. A miserable creature, faint and feeble, incapable of fo much as one good defire, till animated and strengthened by thee. Fickle and mutable, subject to infirmities innumerable, and continual decays; but thou, my God, art the same, resterday and to day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. Ever happy, and just, and wise, and good, ordering all things for the best, after the counsel of thy divine will. Well would it be, if I was but equally disposed

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the old disposed to good and evil; but the corruption of my nature, alas! preponderates strongly to vanity and vice. I easily fall from my own stedsastness, and am carried about with every shifting scene of time,

and chance, and paffion.

And yet thus weak and wavering as I am, thy helping hand can comfort and confirm me. powerful grace, without any human aids, can work wonders in me; can strengthen my resolutions, scatter my fears, and fill my foul with rest and sweet content. If, when I thirst after higher degrees of virtue and devotion, or if I fly to thee for fuccour in distress, when all other succours fail me, (and all but thine will and must prove ineffectual) if then I could but abandon all other hopes, and repose my whole confidence in thee alone; then might I entertain some expectations of thy favour; then wait with joy, for the chearful returns of grace and comfort from above. For all my fuccesses are thy free gift, and I my felf a despicable wretch, not able to effect any good, not in a condition to merit the least of all thy mercies.

What therefore can I have to boast of, who, till I despise and go out of my self, am not so much as qualify'd to receive assistance from thee? Or how can I desire the applause and admiration of men? What! shall I pretend to glory of weakness, and inconstancy, and nothing? This is a vanity beyond example, an extravagance beyond imagination. How soolish and absurd, nay, how hurtful and destructive a vice is ambition, which, by undue pursuit of honour, tobs us of true honour; and, affecting savour with men, incurs punishment and displeasure from God? For he who labours to please himself, is sure at the same

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same time to offend thee; and loses true substantial virtue, by coveting empty praise. For true honour and virtue confift in glorying, not in our felves, but in thee, O Lord; in magnifying, not our own attainments or performances, but thy free grace; and in loving and delighting in nothing, but so far

only, as may advance thy honour.

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Not unto me, therefore, not unto me, but unto thy name be the praise, Pfal. cxv. May men commend and extol not my works, but thy power, which inspired, produced and perfected them: and may this commendation devolve fo entirely upon thy grace, that not the least part of it may fall upon my concurrence with it. Far be it from me to arrogate any thing to my felf; for while I rejoice in thee, I find nothing in my felf to glory in, but my infirmities. And in them I will gladly glory; because the greater my weakness is, the more visible and eminent is thy strength, which is so conspicuously perfect in it. Let unbelieving Jews seek bonour one of another; but I who profess my self one of the faithful, will seek bonour which cometh from God only, John v. For. what is all the fame, and respect, and greatness of this world, if put in the balance of the eternal glory, but exquisite folly, deceitful bubble, and altogether lighter than vanity it felf? All honour therefore, and praise, all might and majesty be ascribed thee, O bleffed Trinity, my God, my light, my truth, my fuccour and defence, my refuge and comfort, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAP. XLVL

Of despising worldly bonour.

CHRIST.

IF thou seest others grow great in reputation and preferment, while thou art overlooked and despised, let this, my son, be no concern to thee. Look up to me and set thy affections and hopes in heaven, and then the neglect and contempt of men

will give thee little trouble.

Disciple.] Were it not, Lord, for the blindness and corruption of nature, which makes me fond of vanities and joys I should have juster notions of these matters. For he, who truly understands himself, cannot but discern, that it is not in the power of any thing without, to do him real prejudice; and confequently, that he can have no reasonable ground to complain of thy providence, however it thinks fit to dispose of such matters. The consciousness of my own fins convinces me, I have deferved, that all the creatures should conspire and make War against me. To me belongs shame and confusion, but to thee only honour and praise is due. And thou hast taught me, that to bear contempt, and hatred, and barbarous treatment, with humility and patience, is the only method of attaining inward peace, and true fatisfaction; the virtue which must recommend me to thy Favour; the best predisposition for light and grace; and the furest and closest band of union with thyself.

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CHAP. XLVII.

Happiness is not to be had, by the favour or friendship of men.

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TE that defires to be happy, by the affection or acquaintance of the best, the greatest man alive will always find his mind unfettled and perplexed. For even the best and greatest are but mortals; and the effectual Remedy against immoderate concern for their being taken away from thee, will be to court the favour of an eternal and immortal friend. Now, the less confidence any man reposes in any earthly comfort, so much the more he ingratiates himself with God. The better he acquaints himself with his own vileness, and the less he is in his own eyes, the higher he rifes in God's esteem, But they, who fancy any thing that is good or mentorious in themselves, put an effectual bar to divine grace. For this is given to the humble, and the spirit of God chuses the contrite heart for the place of his peculiar refidence. Would'st thou abandon felf-conceit, and wean thy heart from all fondness for the creatures, it is not to be imagined what comforts, what overflowing Joys, I would infuse into thy foul. But, while these employ thy thoughts and defires, thou art diverted from all higher objects, and by being too intent upon his works, losest and forgettest the almighty maker. Learn then to subdue thy own will, that thou may'st clearly understand, and readily comply with mine. For any other object, tho' never so trifling and inconsiderable in its own nature, yet, if unduly valu'd, and immodeOf the Imitation of | Baus CHRIST.

rately loved, corrupts the mind, and checks its afpiring after the chief, the only good.

CHAP XLVIII.

Against vain, and pompous learning.

CHRIST.

O not my fon, suppose, that the excellence of a man confists in subtilty of wit, or delicacy of expression. For the kingdom of God does not lie in elegance of speech, or fineness of parts, but in innocence of life and good works. Let my words be thy principal study; for these awaken attention, inlighten the understanding, kindle a holy zeal, excite true contrition, and heal the wounds they make, with the spiritual balm of grace and substantial comfort. Let not growing wifer and more learned be the end thou proposest to thy self in reading; but read, that thou may'ft be qualify'd to practife, and let thy knowledge be manifested by subduing thy vices and passions. For this is improvement indeed, and will turn to better Account, than the nicest and most distinguishing skill, in all the controversies and difficult points, that ever employed the tongues and pens of wrangling logicians, philosophers, and divines. And when thou hast run thro' the whole extent of learning, yet all will turn at last upon one fingle point; and the whole profit of thy pains lies in a narrow. room.

If thou wilt be known indeed, learn of me; for I am the only master that teach men knowledge. I give more perfect, more sublime understanding to babes, to the humble and fincere, than all the celebrated fons of art have ever been able to do.

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those whom I instruct, grow truly wife, are presently enlightned and refined, and by an aftonishing proficience in virtue, outstrip all in the admired science of morality. Most wretched are those vain men, who with infinite toil and time, lay themselves out upon the unprofitable curiofities of human wisdom, and take no pains to inform themselves in their duty to me. The hour alas! draws on apace, when their master Christ shall come with terrible pomp, and call each man to a strict account, and found every con science to the bottom. Then shall Ferusalem be fearched with Candles; Zeph. i. then shall the hidden things of darkness be brought to light; and no man's eloquence or subtilty of arguing shall do him any fervice, before that all-feeing Judge. I raise the meek, and man of mean sense, in an Instant; and teach him at once the grounds of eternal truths, better than a course of many years spent in laborious study, and the most exquisite methods of schools and universities. I bring men to right apprehensions of things, without any noise of words, without the formality of fystems, or vain ostentations of caviling sophistry, or methodical disputing. Of me alone men learn to despise the world, to think things present below their pains and care, to love and seek those that are heavenly and eternal, to refuse honours, to bear injuries and Affronts to trust and hope in me alone, wish for nothing but my Favour, and to speem all things but Dross and Dung, so they may win christ.

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Some disciples of mine have made such wonderful improvements under me, as even to speak things above human comprehension; and grown wifer in solitude and cloisters, than any conversation of learned

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men, or volumes and libraries never fo carefully perused, could have made them. But this is not every man's case; for I do not communicate to all alike. Some I instruct in common matters, others in abstruse and peculiar notions. And as the meafure and quality of the matter, so the manner of imparting it, is very different. To some I have shew'd my self in figures and parables, dreams and mystick representations; to others I have reveal'd the most important Secrets in the most clear intelligible Method. Books speak alike to all, but all are not qualified to be taught by them alike. But I, instead of dead letters presented to the outward Senses, perform my business within, I fill the mind with truth, fuit my felf to each man's genius and capacity, fearch every corner of the heart, understand their most retired thoughts, inspire good desires, promote and finish those desires by bringing them to action, and deal to every one the various gifts of my spirit, in fuch kinds and proportions, as I know to be most useful and seasonable.

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CHAP. XLIX.

Of meddling with the world as little as may be.

CHRIST.

In many things, my son, content thy self with being ignorant, and chuse to live as a man dead, while among the living; as one, whose thoughts and affections are crucified to all the world; and all the world to them. Many things are to be overlook'd as if you saw them not: thy mind drawn off from the distracting variety of objects, and fasten'd close down to the things that make for thy peace and salvation

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Disciple.] Alas! Lord, what a wretched case is this world in? How distant from this meek and abstracted temper of mind? Trisling loss is seriously lamented. A little fordid gain engages mens time, and labour, and thoughts. The day is too short for their vigorous pursuits, and anxious cares break their sleep; while all their spiritual concerns lie neglected and forgotten. Their diligence and study is determin'd to matters of small or no importance; and the one thing necessary is laid aside, as if it were not worthy a fingle thought. So vain is man, fo totally immers'd in fensible objects and worldly follitudes, and so contentedly does he perish in vanity and vexation, unless thy grace make him wifer, and raise his mind to better and eternal concerns,

CHAP.

CHAP. L.

Against a fond and easy credulity.

DISCIPLE.

DRD, be thou my belp in trouble, for vain is the belp of man, Psal. cviii. How often have I fail'd of succour, and true friendship, when I had most reason to expect it? How often found it, where I entertained no such expectation? So vain and uncertain is all trust in man, so entirely does the safety of good men depend upon thee alone. Blessed therefore and for ever admir'd be that good Provividence, which orders and disposes all events, to thy impotent and fickle, thy ignorant and perverse, thy deceitful and deceivable creatures!

Who among all the fons of men ever behaved himself with so prudent care, and exact circumspection, as not fometimes to be over-reached by treachery and trick, and involved in difficulties and troubles, which the most jealous forefight knew not how to suspect or discover? But he, who places no confidence in human fubtilty, and rests in God alone, and acts with downright honesty, and a good conscience, is less subject to such inconveniences, than cunning and intriguing men: or, if he be surprized and imposed upon, yet is his deliverance generally more speedy and effectual, and his comforts in the mean while more fensible and supporting. For thou, Lord, never forfakest those utterly, who put their trust in thee. A faithful friend, and fuch as will stand by us in adversity and want, is exceeding hard to be found; but thou art always the fame, and no change of circumstances can change thee, or abate thy

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thy affection. Happy is the foul that is built upon the rock Christ; were this my case, the sear of the malicious would not distract, nor the reproaches of the envious disturb me.

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But who can foresee all future inconveniencies, or prevent all that he may foresee? And, if the ills we are aware of, and provide against, are so grievous to be born; how much more heavy will be those wounds, whose smart and terror are doubled by surprize? We often blame our felves for not being wifer, and have reason to condemn our too easy credulity; that especially which eagerly assents to the flatteries and commendations of men, and relies upon their liberal professions of friendship and esteem. For, tho' they call and think us angels, yet we cannot but be conscious to our selves, that we are no better than men, frail and wretched men! whom therefore shall I believe; whom indeed but thee, O Lord? For thou art truth it felf, incapable of deceiving, or of being deceived. But as for men, they are all lyars, weak and unconstant, frail and treacherous; especially, in what they say, so exceeding fabulous and vain, that it is a point of prudence to suspend our faith, and thou hast wisely taught us to beware of their false infinuations. Psal. cxvi. Thou haft forewarned us of their treachery and malice, told us, that a Man's enemies shall be those of his own kindred and boushold; and that when men say, Lo, Christ is here, or lo, he is there, we ought not to believe them, Mat. xxiv. The truth of these Predictions I have learned by fad experience, and wifh may grow wifer thereby.

256 Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST.

Be fure (fays one) you keep this private which I tell you; and yet that very man in the next company divulges what he had imparted just before, under the feal of fecrefy. From fuch unfincere dealers as these I beg to be delivered, and from their treacherous ways; that I may neither come within their power of betraying and abusing my confidence, nor injure any who repose the like in me; make me then Lord, a strict observer of truth, and religiously firm to my word: for what I cannot but refent, when done to me, it never can become me to put upon any other person. Silence indeed and forbearing to concern one's felf in the affairs of our neighbours, is not only a virtue, but a convenience and a benefit. Caution in crediting, referve in speaking, and revealing one's felf to very few, are the best securities both of peace and a good understanding with the world, and of the inward peace of our own minds. Endeavouring to approve our felves to the knower and fearcher of hearts, and not fuffering every blaft of idle report, or empty profession, to carry us about, but guarding our conversation carefully, and labouring to conform every thought, word and action to the divine will: these are equally a good man's fafety, and fatisfaction, and wisdom. How fure and calm a retreat does that man make, who chuses to preserve thy favour, by escaping from pomp and noise; preferring thy approbations before the loudest fame and applause; and willingly abandoning those painted follies, whose glittering outfides impose upon our fenses? Who prefers contrite forrow, severe virtue, and solitary devotion, before the gaudy pleasures of the world, or that empty admiration, which ambition and vainglory affect. Praise is indeed the consequence and encourage-

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of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 257 encouragement of virtue, but it is fometimes so unfeasionably applied, as to become its bane and corruption too. For the whole life of man is one continual temptation, and we have a subtle adversary to deal with, who loses no advantage of undoing us. Our praises he improves to his own purposes, by swelling us up with them into pride and self-conceit. And many souls have perished by that virtue, published and celebrated, which if unknown and unobserved, had come to great perfection; and been infinitely happy, by the advantage of secresy and silence.

CHAP. LI.

Of trusting in God, when men speak ill of us.

CHRIST.

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CTand fast, my fon, and be not terrified with the I shock of calumny and reproach, but let me be thy refuge and fure confidence. Alas! what are words but empty founds, that break and fcatter in the air, and make no real impression? If not report alone, but thy own conscience too reproach thee; bewail thy guilt, and reform what hath been amis. But, if upon examination thou find no ground of accusing thyself, strengthen thy mind in innocence, look upon this injurious judgment as a fuffering for God's fake, and bear it accordingly with patience and contentedness. He expects that thou should'st refist even unto blood, when called to it, Heb. xii. But how will the man be able to endure wounds and blows, who is not yet a match for verbal affronts? Enquire a little into the true grounds of fuch impatience, and thou shalt find it a symptom of a soul fick Kk

fick and indisposed. For how can it be otherwise accounted for, than, that thou art yet carnal, and retainest a greater regard for the opinion of men, than can be well confistent with a person who hath renounced the world, and professes to dedicate himfelf entirely to God? Whence is reproof fo grating and uneafy? Whence that follicitous care to contrive excuses? Whence that forward zeal in thy own vindication, if not from a dread and abhorrence of that contempt, to which thy supposed miscarriages would expose thee? Fondness of honour and reputation lies at the bottom, and inordinate defire to recommend thyself to man's esteem. Which shews thou art not yet so humble, so resigned, but that a principle of vanity lurks still within; nor is the world yet dead to thee, or thou to the world.

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Attend diligently to my instructions, and the cenfures of ten thousand men will not be able to disturb thee. Let them proceed in their envy and malice, and blacken thy name after the most spiteful manner that hell itself can practise or invent, yet what art thou the worse? Can all this change thy person? Or hath thy head one hair the less for it? Do but compose thy mind, and resolve to despise it, and all blows over. These scandals vanish and fly away, like motes in the fun, and are neither more nor less, than what refentment makes them. To be provoked with every flanderous word argues a meaness of foul, a want of due regard for God; but the brave generous mind, whose all is in God, and who refers himfelf entirely to his judgment, is above the terrors and discouragements of men, and lays no stress upon their notions of things. For their notions are free wide quently rash and false; they seldom do, and some is sp time

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times cannot, enter into the real merits of the cause; but to me all hearts are open, and from me no fecrets are hid. I know distinctly, both in what manner, and with what intention, every thing is done. The person who receives, and does the wrong, are both under my cognizance; and even the wrong it self is done by my permission; that by this means the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. I hall not fail to make a just and clear decision between the guilty and the innocent; and call both to account hereafter; however I may think fit to try them in the mean while, and keep those things in the dark at prefent, which then shall be notorious to all the world. And whatfoever may prevail now, my judgment will be according to equity and truth; and my fentence, once pronounced, can never be revers'd. Few indeed are capable of discerning the justice of my providence, in fuffering innocent men to be traduced, and their honest actions misunderfood. But I do nothing without wife reasons, and neither am, nor can be, mistaken in my methods, how much foever short-fighted and inconsiderate men are confounded about them.

Appeal then in all these cases to my determination, and let thy matter rest so fully there, as not mly to difregard what others think concerning thee, but even in some measure to distrust thy own judgfoul, ment concerning thy felf. Confider, that I think genemany things fit for my fervants, which they can by him- to means imagine convenient for themselves. errors try reflection preserves a good man's temper, in upon very accident of life; because he knows, that every e fre- kident falls out thus by my direction. This buoys some is spirits up against the insults and injuries of ca-

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lumny and detraction; and keeps them from swelling into pride and immoderate joy, when his innocence is cleared, and his virtue commended. He knows that God fees not as man fees; for man judges according to outward and fallible appearances, but God fearches the reins and the heart, and judges

righteous judgment.

Disciple.] O Lord, thou righteous judge, strong and patient, who understandest the frailty and the wickedness of men, be thou my strong rock, my trust and defence, Psal. vii. For even in my own conscience I dare not be confident; since many things which to me are either unknown or forgotten thou haft a perfect knowledge, and exact remembrance of. I ought therefore in all reproofs and reproaches to fubmit with patience, even though my heart condemn me not; because thou, who permittest these things, art greater than my beart, and knowest all things, John iii. Thus reason and religion both convince me, I ought to behave my felf; but, if at any time p. flion and frailty have exceeded in too nice and tender a fense of these things, pardon, I beseech thee, what is past, and enable me to be more refigned for the time to come. Thy mercy alone will avail me more than all my laboured excuses; and pardon is what I r. ther chuse, than the most confident testimony of my own conscience. For though I should know nothing by my self, yet am I not hereby justified; for he that judgeth me is the Lord: I Cor. iv. The Lord, who will one day bring to light the hidden things of dishonesty, even those, which have escaped the committer's own observation. And therefore, if thou, Lord, should'st be extreme to mark what is done amis no flesh living could be justified in thy fight, Pf. cxxx CHAP 3. Pf. cxliii. 2.

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CHAP. LII.

Nothing too much to suffer for eternal life.

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TET not, my fon, thy labours or fufferings for me and thy duty, or any other fort of hardthip or tribulation in this world, fo far daunt thy courage, but that my promise still should be a fure anchor-hold of hope; and this reflection ever minifters comfort, that I am able to recompence thee not only beyond what is reasonable to expect, but even impossible for thee to wish or imagine. Thy toils will not continue very long, nor will thy pain and trouble always torment thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward and fee how glorious a prospect opens it self: how speedily the end of all thy fufferings approaches; and how fuddenly forrow and tumult vanish away. Even time it self is not of everlasting continuance; but that which is bounded within fo very narrow a space, as this short span of life, cannot in any fair computation be counted long or great. Proceed then in thy duty with vigor and undaunted resolution; ply thy work hard in my vineyard, and fill the station I have appointed thee to; thy Wages are certain and valuable, for I my self will be thy exceeding great reward, Gen. xvii.

Perfift in writing, in reading, in finging, meditation, in devout prayer, in fortitude and patience. For the things prepar'd for them that love God, are richly worth these and greater conflicts; all thou must do, all thou canst suffer, are in no degree worthy to be compared with them. The day is coming, and fix'd in my unalterable decree, adorn'd with the tri-

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umphs of joy and peace; that mighty revolution. when these alternate successions of day and night shall cease; and everlasting uninterrupted light shall thine for ever. There shall be lustre infinite, satisfactions unbroken, unconceivable, rest eternal, and above the power of any future danger. There shall then be no place left for that melancholy wish; O that thou would'st deliver me from the body of this death! Rom. vii. No occasion for that complaint, Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my habitation in this barren wilderness, Psal. cxx. For even the last enemy shall be subdued, and death itself destroyed, I Cor. xv. Salvation then and life shall reign for ever; forrow and anguish, fighs and tears shall flee away; a crown of rejoycing put upon every head, and thou shalt be happy in the sweet society of saints and angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the assembly of the first-born, Heb. xii.

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Oh! could'st thou now but see the heavens open, and with the fight of mortal eye behold the bright and everlasting crowns of my chosen; were thy heart large enough to admit a just idea of their trophies and glories, whom once the world despised, and thought not worthy to live upon the earth; thou then would'ft gladly embrace their fufferings and reproaches, abandon all thy vain defires of worldly grandeur, and disdain the perishing pleasures of the present life. Humility and patience would then appear in all their native beauties; and even affliction and ignominy difplay fuch charms, as must attract thy love, and make thee esteem the reproaches of Christ greater treasures and gain, than all the majesty and honour, and most celebrated reputation, that a mortal state is capable of receiving.

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 263

Attend then feriously to these important truths. For they, if confidered and believed in good earnest, will stop thy mouth, and effectually silence all thy complaints. For fure the fufferings of a moment cannot be thought too dear a price for eternal happiness in exchange. Surely the kingdom of God is no trifling concern. And when the lofing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that loss; nothing a hard bargain for that infinite advantage. Grovel then upon the earth no longer, but stand erect, and lift thy eyes and heart to heaven. See there the bleffed effects, the mighty fuccess, of all those sharp conflicts, which my faints, while in the body, underwent; the end of all their tryals and adversities, their painful severities and pious labours. These mortify'd afflicted men once reputed the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, I Cor. iv. the common mark of infolence and malice, are now in perfect joy; their forrows swallowed up in transporting bliss and comfort; their dangers changed into secure peace; their labours into ease and sweet repose; their persecutions and unjust accusations before the bar of men, into thrones of glory, where they fit and judge the world, and live, and rejoice, and reign with me for ever.

CHAP. LIII.

The joys of eternity, and miseries of this present life.

DISCIPLE.

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n, tO Bleffed mansions of the heavenly city! O bright and glorious day of eternal happiness! A day that never declines; a sun that never sets, nor is obscured by any succeeding night; but a state al-

ways chearful, always fixed, and fecured from change and forrow, from danger and decay. How do I pant and thirst after that happy hour, when this bleffed morning shall dawn and shed it's beams, and with a wondrous Lustre put an end to all darkness and mifery of mortality? It already shines indeed in the hearts and hopes of these good men, whose conversation is even now in heaven: But then theirs is but a distant prospect, and such as, while they sojourn here, presents things only in a glass. The citizens and inhabitants of those blessed regions see it with their naked eye; they feel and enjoy its sweetness, and are all enlightned with its rays; while the distressed sons of Eve endure and groan under their exile, and cannot but lament the bitterness of this imperfect gloomy day, which men on earth call evil. A day but short, and, which is worse, dismal and uncomfortable. For, who can worthily express the pains, the perplexities of body and foul, which are the necessary, the inseparable incumbrances of man's present condition? A condition, wherein he is polluted with fo many fins, entangled with fo many difficulties, befet with fo many misfortunes, oppress'd with so many fears, distracted with so many cares, disturbed and diverted from his main concern by fo many impertinences, deluded with fo many vanities, confounded with fo many errors, confumed and worn out with fo much labour and trouble; affaulted by temptations, and emasculated by pleasures, and tormented with great variety of necessities and want?

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O! when will there be an end of this so complicated misery? When may I hope to be enlarged and released from this bondage of sin? When shall my thought

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. thoughts and defires center, and be for ever fixed, in thee, my God, alone? when may I hope to attain true joy in thee, without any allay of bodily fuffering, without any distraction of mind? when shall I rest in firm untroubled peace? peace from accidents and temptations without, peace from guilt and misguiding, from the follicitations of lust, and the violence of passion within? when shall I see my Jesus face to face, and contemplate the beauties of his kingdom and Glorious Godhead; when will my dearest Saviour be my all in all, and receive me to those delightful habitations prepared for them that love him, and that are loved by him, before the foundation of the world.

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behold! I am here defolate and poor, a stranger and alone in an enemy's country; where wars rageand never cease, and terrible distresses come thick and ftrong upon me every day and hour. Be thou my comfort in this exiled and desolate condition. Asswage my pain, and incline thy favour to thy fervant, whose parched and languishing foul gapeth unto thee as a thirsty land. Psal. exliii. Thou only art able to do this; for what a mistaken world calls comforts, are but so many fresh additions to my burden. I long most earnestly to enjoy, but cannot yet attain my wish. Gladly would I grasp and cling to heavenly things, but am detained and fastened down to earth, by vanities below, and unmortify'd affections, my mind labours to get above these; but even, when the spitit is willing I find the flesh extreamly weak, and my sensual, prevails over my better and heavenly inclinations.

Thus am I, wretched man, involved in a perpetual war, and live in contradiction to my felf; my own hindrance and torment, moving different ways, and

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pursuing differents ends and prospects, at one and the same time. How great is my concern and conflict, when I fet my mind to meditate and pray, and, in the midst of this exercise, am interrupted by a multitude of wordly and carnal imaginations crowding in upon me ? Go not far from me, O my God, neither cast away thy fervant in displeasure. Scatter these dark and gloomv clouds, which intercept my vision of thee, by the brightness of thy lightning; of thunder upon them from heaven. Cast out thine arrows and dicomfit them. Pfal. cxliv. Recollect my broken and scattered thoughts, help me to forget the things of this world, to reject and despise, and effectually expel all sinful imaginations. Affift me, thou substantial truth, and root me fast, that no blast of vanity may shake and unsettle my heart. Diffuse thy heavenly sweetness through my foul, and chase away all nauseous, alluring and impure affections, for these cannot stand before thee.

Particularly, dearest Lord, I implore thy Compasfion upon my infirmities; and in thy mercy impute not to me my many wandring thoughts in prayer. For there, I must confess, my distractions are great and frequent; and I am often least of all in that place, where I fland or kneel: Thus, while my body is before thy footstool, my mind is carried away I know not whither. And this is a melancholy reflection, fuch as gives me occasion to suspect, and deeply bewail my felf. Since where my thoughts are, there properly and indeed am I; and where my thoughts frequent, and delight to dwell, there without doubt is the object of my affection and concern; and that, which either natural disposition or long cultom renders most delightful, that to be sure is most familia

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familiar, and comes continually uppermost. All this I gather from that observation, which thou, eternal truth, hast left us, that where our treasure is there

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This then is the rule, by which I try and found the bent of my heart; if I love heaven, the thoughts of it will be frequent and pleasant to me. But if I love the world, the effect of this will be, that I shall feel excess of joy in prosperous events, and be as immoderate in my grief for those that are otherwise. If I love the flesh, wanton and carnal imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with fatiffaction; but if I love the spirit, I shall find in spiritual objects a grateful relish, and dwell upon, them with true delight. For this my own fenses and experience affure me, that what I love most I am best pleased to be entertained with, eagerest to hear, and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting impressions of, upon my mind. And therefore though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire, the happiness of them, who can abandon all, and stick to thee alone; that commit a holy violence upon their natural inclinations, crucify the flesh, and with a pure bright zeal, and a clear conscience, can offer holy and fervent prayers, a spiritual and unblemish'd sacrifice, where all without are forbidden entrance, and all within is composed. These men, so firmly intent upon thee and their devotions, are qualified to praise thee with those angels, whose refined excellencies they so happily aspire after, and to whose bleffed fociety thou wilt one day exalt and admit them.

CHAP. LIV.

Of the desire of eternal life, and the happiness of them who strive manfully.

CHRIST.

M Y fon, when thou feelest thy soul inflamed with an eager defire of eternal happiness, and thinkest long to be released from this prison of the body, that thou may'ft be bleffed with a nearer and more distinct view, a perfect, full and uninterrupted fruition, of my brightness and majesty: fet open all the avenues of thy foul, and gladly receive the holy inspiration. Express thy humblest thanks to God, and be duly fenfible of his goodness, who deals so bountifully with thee, visits thee with his mercy, supports and strengthens thee with his grace, and raises those affections up to heaven, which have a fatal innate tendency to immerfe thy foul in earth, and flesh, and sense. For, do not mistake the matter, no reasonings or endeavours of thy own have power to effect so good a work, or to create those spiritual inclinations; the operation of God is in them, and they are owing to no less noble a cause, than the free and bountiful donation of divine grace and favour; the defign of which is to advance and exalt thy virtues; to make thee humble and modest, with reflections upon the strength of another made perfect in thy weakness; to fit thee for future tryals, and forer conflicts; to engage thy affections, and encourage thy preserverance, in the faithful service of so gracious, so good a master.

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Nor let thy spirits be dejected, son, if this be not done

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done with all that zeal, and intire refignation of a heart perfectly undivided, which thou could'st wish. For, as in common fire there will always be fome smoke; so in those holy flames many Men are sincerely defirous of heavenly things, who yet cannot quite divest themselves of carnal affections, nor be absolutely free from all temptations. And therefore some other Prospects will often interpose, as well as that of promoting God's glory only by those good actions, for which the affiftances of his grace are fought, and earnestly implored; of this thy own Experience convinces thee by fundry Instances, in which thou feeft no Reason to suspect thy own Integrity. Nor will all that be condemned at the last day, which was attempted with a mixture of some defire to promote thy own temporal advantage. Only take care that this defire prevail not fo far, as to incline thee to prefer what may contribute to thy profit or delight, before those things which will procure my Favour. With a confiderate christian my defire will take place above his own will; and if it reign not in his heart alone, yet it always fits Supreme, and overrules the rest. I know all thy desires, and thy groanings are not bid from me. Pfal xxxviii. Thou would'st this Instant be admitted into the glorious liberty of God's fons: the blifsful and eternal mansions of thy heavenly father's house are thy longings and delight; and as the hart panteth after the water springs, so doth thy foul pant and thirst after me. Psal. xlii. But as yet thou art not ripe for these joys; that happy hour is not come; for this life is the time of warfare, and action, and Trial, and not of rest, and joy, and triumph; and thou must be content to wait with patience, till the kingdom of God shall come in perfection. The

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The condition of mortals upon earth, is that exercife and discipline; the joys they feel are comforts and supports, not full and perfect happiness; they are given not to fatisfy, but only to fustain them. And therefore receive them as they are, and use them to their proper purpose; that by them thy constancy and patience may be preserv'd from finking under the weight of any difficulties, which either the doing or fuffering things, to which frail and corrupt nature is averse, may at any time expose thee. For the change of a man's felf is a very laborious undertaking, and yet this must be done. The flesh with its lusts must be crucified, a new heart and a new Spirit introduced, many things done, which offer violence to a man's inclinations, many forfaken and let alone, to which he is strongly disposed. Others thou shalt often observe crown'd with success, when thy own no less painful endeavours are defeated and disappointed: Others look'd upon as oracles, when thy better and wifer advice is difregarded and despised! Others will fuffer long, and at last obtain their defire; thou, perhaps, tho' equally fervent and zealous in thy application, difinist with a repulse; others be great in fame or general esteem, while thy more deserving virtues are pass'd over in silence; others caressed, preferr'd, trusted in matters of consequence and looked upon as useful and necessary, while thou art reputed a uteless and infignificant person. These mistaken or partial judgments of men will grate hard upon human nature; but even these will turn to good account, if fustained with meekness, and mo defty, and Silence. For these are the very method by which God brings the fidelity of his fervants to the touch; 'tis thus that he discovers, whether they hav gaine

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gained a conquest over nature and themselves. no fort of mortification is of happier consequence, than that which exposes men to the fight and fuffering of things, to which their own inclinations are most violently averse. Especially, when what they cannot but conceive most unfit, most absurd and unaccountable constrains them to go against their own fence, and fubmit to a higher power, without any reserve to the private judgment of their own reason in the case. This is indeed difficult and a perfection of submission not easy to be compass'd; but did men well confider, how great the advantages of a temper so resigned are at present, how glorious the reward of it hereafter, and how quickly the troubles it exposes them to will end in that reward; the comforts of fuch discipline would be sensible and great, and they would even enjoy their afflictions and temptations, fustained with so pure, so bright a prospect, of the inestimable and approaching recompence.

For this short empty pleasure, which now thou chusest for my sake to decline, shall be compensated with solid and everlasting joy in heaven: and there thy largest wishes shall be gratisted. There shall be plenty of every thing that is good. Fruition perfect and secure, free from the least allay of sear, or possibility of suture losses. Between thy will and mine shall then be perfect harmony; no opposition there, no obstruction; but every thing shall conspire to sulfil all thy heart's desire, and render thy happiness as exquisite, as finite nature is capable of. Thy present ignominy, born with patience, shall there be paid with brighter glory; thy mourning weeds exchanged for robes of light and joy; and he who sits here in the lowest place, shall there be seated on an

eternal

eternal throne. Let it not then be grievous to thee, to humble and fubmit thy felf to the capricious humours of men, with whom thou converseft in this world; but rather so compose thy mind, and order all thy actions, as readily and meekly to comply with the commands of thy superiours, the defires of thy equals, the requests of thy inferiours, to do for all what lawfully thou mayeft, and to endure patiently whatever they shall, but ought not, to do to thee. Let vain men pursue vanity, leave them to their own methods. Let them place their glory and happiness in such objects, as their own mistaken judgments shall determine them to. Let them admire, and above all things covet a celebrated name, and popular applause: but do thou place thy excellence and honour in the contempt of thy felf, thy diligence in discharging my commands, thy zeal in seeking and advancing my honour and kingdom; and let this be first and chief in thy defires, that whether thou live, thou may'st live unto the Lord; or whether thou die, thou mayest die unto the Lord; so that whether by life or death, the Lord Jesus may be magnified in the body. Rom. xiv. Pfal. i. 20.

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CHAP. LV.

An act of refignation to God in time of adverfity.

DISCIPLE.

B Lessed be that wisdom and goodness, O hole father, which performs all thy will; for who thy will decrees, cannot be otherwise than good an wise. Give me grace, I beseech thee, to rejoic not in my self, or any other, but in thee alone; so thou art my only hope and crown, my joy and global crown c

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rv. All I have is received at thy bountiful hand; bountiful to a most unworthy creature, who neither could procure, nor deferve the least of all thy mercies: and thou, by giving and compleating, hast not loft thy property and right in all, which by thy means I enjoy or do. For what am I, alas! but a weak helpless wretch? acquainted with misery from my cradle, and confumed with trouble and vexation; my face is grown old with tears, and my heart perplexed and broken with doubts, and forrows and vehement passions. I beg and long most earnestly for the bleffing of peace, that peace and inward confolation, which thy children feed and feast upon. hou shalt fill my soul with this, it will overflow with joy and praise, and continually breath out holy hymns to the honour of thy name. But if thou turn away thy face, as sometimes thou seest fit to do, I find my felf unable to run in the way of thy commandments; and, prostrating my self in the anguish of my soul, I beat my breast, and wring my hands, for the loss of that light and comfort, that frength and protection, which I enjoyed, while under the shadow of thy wings, and defended from the affaults of forrow and advertity.

Righteous father, (then fay I) the time is come when thou art pleased to try me, but even at this time, and at all others, praised be thy name. Dearth father, it is very meet, that now thou call'st me wit, I should suffer in obedience to thy will. Most bonoured father, this is thy hour, even that imporant hour, which thou from all eternity hast ordaind, to be the feafon of my outward oppression and accomfort becoming the instrument of endless life and joy to me: but tho' this heaviness may en-

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dure for a night, yet light and glory will return in the morning. This, holy father, is thy own appointment, and what thou willest thou never willest in vain. For even this fuffering in the present life is a mark of thy favour and friendship; the returns, the instruments, the manner, the continuance of my afflictions, are all of thy permitting; for nothing is or can be done, without thy providence and direction, without some wife and excellent defign. Even I my felf am fenfible, how good is it for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy flatutes, Pfal. exix. and utterly reject all pride and carnal confi-The shame and self reproach I laboured under, hath taught me to expect relief from God, and not from man. And all my afflictions put me upon contemplating the unfearchable depths of thy providence, which, with a wonderful temper of justice and equity, layeth these burdens upon bad and good, without any peculiar or discriminating marks of love or hatred in this prefent world.

I will therefore render the most unfeigned thanksgiving to my God, for that in marvellous kindness he hath not spared the rod, when it was convenient for me: I acknowledge his mercy, even in the pains and croffes, and forrows I have endured, whether of mind, or body, or estate; and yet much more, for those refreshments and remedies, which thou alone that hast afforded me. For vain is all the help of man; tiple but thou art the true, the powerful physician of souls, thou woundest and healest; thou bringest down to the gen gates of hell, and raisest up again, Deut. xxxii. Thy chastisement shall teach me wisdom; thou shalt beat wit, me with the rod, and I shall not die. Behold me, he s Lord, most willingly submitting to thy discipline; thick

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Offrike, and spare not, so thou bend my stubborn heart, and bring down my high spirit, and make me tractable and obedient to thee. I, Lord, and mine are at thy disposal, put forth thy hand and touch them as thou pleafest. For this I know, that how grievous foever these temporal crosses may be, yet better is it to feel the weight of thy hand here, than hereafter. All things are naked and open to thee, even the inmost recesses of our hearts; thou knowof the things that will be before they are; and needed not that any should inform thee what is done upon earth. Thou feest what will contribute most to my improvement in goodness; how great and good effect distresses have, to scour the rust from our unactive minds, and brighten all our virtues. Take then, my God, thy own measures; I only beg, that thou woud'ft not disdain, and give me over, and hink me unworthy of thy care, for those blemishes and misdemeanors of my life, which none are betto acquainted with, which none indeed are thooughly acquainted with, but thou the fearcher of ent hearts alone.

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Work in me, I intreat thee, a true amendment; r of instruct me in all things fit for me to know; dispose for me to love all things worthy my affection; to think, one that every thing deferves my praise, in proportion as an; pleases thee; to esteem nothing highly, but what puls, sprecious and honourable in thy fight; to look with the generous disdain upon all that thou thinkest vile, Thy and never be reconciled to what thou hatest. Let me beat of, I befeech thee, judge by outward appearances, me, he seeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, ine; thich are subject to infinite delusions and mistakes. de give me a right judgment in all things, whether M m 2

they relate to this or another state, to the outward, or the inner man: and, above all, let it be my particular care to inform my felf in thy will concerning me, Men, who form their judgment upon sense, often err; men, who set their affections upon the fensible objects of this world, are frequently disappointed and miserable: for, is a man, for instance, one whit the better, because he is grown greater in other men's esteem? Is common opinion the standard of merit? Nothing less. Here every man abufes his fellow: the cheat imposes upon another as great a cheat; the vain puffs up the vain; the blind misleads the blind; the weak supports the weak; and all the while, by empty undeferved commendations, each brings a true reproach upon the other, while he extols him against sense and reason. For after all, these praises are but words without any fignificance; nothing more than air and empty found for every man is just as good, and neither more not less, than he is in thy esteem only.

CHAP. LVI.

A man must be content with meaner acts of virtue, when he is not disposed for greater.

CHRIST.

of transport and intent contemplation upon heavenly objects at all times. Thou carriest about with the a load of infirmity and corruption, which will often damp the clearest flames of devotion, darken the mind, and check its noble flights; and make the know and feel, that mortal flesh and blood is a heavy

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but infeperable, incumbrance upon a rational and religious foul. While men are in the body, there is no remedy, but they must feel and groan under the weight. And groan they ought indeed, when they consider, how great an interruption this is to their attendance upon, and entire dedication of their time and thoughts, to God and heavenly objects. These they must be content to dwell upon as much as may be, by using to good purpose all those happy intervals, which leisure and a good temper of mind allow them.

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But when the foul is indifposed for nobler exercifes, when cares or infirmities press it down, let it not be unactive. Variety is here of use; and works of a meaner rank in the scale of virtue must be recurred to; that thou may'ft be still employ'd, still waiting for the happy hour, when I shall return and visit thee with larger measures of my Grace. Bear with meekness the present discomfort and incapacity, the dry and barren state of thy foul, till I send my refreshing dews, and infuse a principle of fruitfulness, for a product in greater plenty and perfection. For I can foon make thee to forget thy past troubles, and fatisfy thy mind with the abundance of peace. I open for thee the spacious plains of scripture, that thou may'ft be enlarged, and run the way of my commandments in liberty; and, with a foul full of joy and inward exultation, fay, I recken that the fufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, Rom. viii.

CHAP. LVII.

A man should think correction, not comfort, his due.

DISCIPLE.

I Ord, I must needs with shame confess my self altogether unworthy thy comforts, or any part of that care thou art pleased to take of my soul; and therefore I have no pretence to complain of hard usage, or injustice, when thou withdrawest thy grace, and leavest me to my felf. Whole seas of tears could not fo cleanse my polluted foul, as to render it pure enough to merit the bleffed influences of thy spirit. Scourges and vengeance are the portion of a wretch, who by fo many and fo grievous transgressions hath offended thy majesty. The more therefore I reflect upon my own finfulness, the clearer and juster notions I have of thy free undeserved mercy. For merciful thou art, even to astonishment, whose bowels thus yearn over the work of thy own hands; who thus to all the world hath manifested the riches of thy grace in the veffels of mercy, and extendeft thy liberality to those who have no right to challenge, no recommendation to induce thee to it.

But, if we could pretend to comforts, yet how could we expect such divine, such incomparably sweet and noble marks of thy favour? So very unlike, so much above any human helps or encouragements? For how could I expect the bread of life from heaven? Good works I know of none I have to plead; but the slightest recollection even amazes and confounds me with sins innumerable brought to my remembrance. My vehement proneness to evil, and shameful sloth and backwardness to reformation

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and goodness, are of themselves so evident, that should I labour to cloak them, the atrempt must needs be vain; for thou, the fearcher of hearts, art privy to them; thou canst disprove me, and no advocate is to be found, who could offer any thing in my vindication. What then can I justly lay claim to, but hell and everlasting flames? I own with grief and shame, that reproach and contempt are my due; and that I am unworthy to be named among thy fons, or even thy meanest servants. Nature indeed starts back, and cannot without reluctancy acknowledge its own vileness and guilt; but I will offer violence to my native pride, and freely confess my fins, that thou may'ft shew thy justice and faithfulness, in a full and free pardon of the faults I do

voluntarily confess.

But where shall I find words fit for so miserable a condition, or how shall so scandalous a creature apply to thee for pardon? I know no other terms than these, that become my mouth. 'Lord, I have finned, I have done wickedly. Mercy thou judge of quick and dead, mercy, or I perish. Respite thy Sentence yet a little while, and grant me fome time at least to bewail my misery, before I be swallowed up in darkness, and go into a land, black with the terrors of the Shadow of death. Job. x. What reparation can be had, from men laden with guilt and infirmity, than that they should seriously bewail, and humble themselves for their mighty and manifold provocations? Hence all our hopes of remission fpring, here the first seeds of a reconciliation take root; they joy of a peaceful conscience is sown in tears; the acknowledgment of our weakness is the first step towards repairing our loss, the first desence against

against the wrath to come; and in these melancholy solitudes the gracious God and penitent soul meet and embrace each other. A broken and a contrite heart is reputed a sacrifice; Psal. li. Thou, in wonderful condescension preferrest it before the odours, the sweetest Incense, or whole hecatombs of burnt-offerings. Of this that precious ointment, whose perfumes, when it anointed thy holy seet, filled the whole house, was an emblem; for thou, Lord, never didst or wilt, despise a soul afflicted with a sense of sin. Contrition and humility are our sanctuary against the rage and malice of our spiritual adversary; and tears of penitence are that purifying stream, which washes off the stains and blemishes of our polluted souls.

CHAP. LVIII.

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The grace of God dwells not with worldly-minded men. CHRIST.

HE tokens of my love are of a nobler kind, than that they should submit to be rivall'd by the Bleffings of this would; for heavenly comforts disdain to mix with those of earth. If then, my fon, thou defired to be filled full of my benediction and grace, all that obstruct its free possession of thy heart must be affectually rejected. Covet retirement, and prefer private conversation with God, before all the diversions of human fociety. Esteem no company fo delightful as thy closet and thy devotions; and there, by fervent prayers, pour out thy foul to God, that thy Zeal may be quickned, and thy peace of confcience feoured. Let the whole world be mean in thy efteem, and account it a greater honour to be called and chosen of God, than any advantages fortune or advancement can confer. For, be

be affured, thy soul cannot admit of two such different affections, to the love of me, and transitory pleasures. The most intimate acquaintance and dearest friends must not stand in competition with me; but they who will be mine in good earnest, must follow the apostle's advice, and behave themselves as Strangers and pilgrims in a world which must shortly be dissolved. 2 Pet. iii. And when the time of this, or their own, dissolution approaches; the joy and holy trust of that mind, which sits loose to all here below, is

more bleffed, than words can utter.

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But to live thus abstracted and disengaged from the world, is a perfection not attainable by every common man; nor can the fenfual person taste the delights, or enjoy the liberty of a true spiritual state. For this requires a distance to be kept from all external objects, that those things human nature loves most tenderly should be renounced; nay, even that himself should be so; for each man is his own worst enemy, and the most threatning dangers rise from within. He that hath gained an entire conquest over himself, will find it no great difficulty to subdue all other opposition; and this is a compleat victory indeed. And when the fenfual appetite fubmits readily to my will, this man is mafter of himself and all the world. But they, who would aspire to this perfection, must set out with resolution, and early by the ax to the root of the tree; that no darling fin, no corrupt or inordinate affection, may be left stand-For all that bitterness and Sin, which is neceffary to be hewn down, in order to an entire reformation and heavenly purity of heart and life, are but so many branches of that corrupt stock, the irregular love of a mans own felf. And when that Nn flock

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stock is killed and cut down, profound peace, and uninterrupted happiness, are the consequents of such Mortification.

The only reason why so many continue still entangled in fenfual affections, and find themselves unable to foar above themselves and the incumbrances here below, is that very few have attained to the skill of dying to their own inclinations, and divesting themselves of narrow and selfish designs. For he who affects to converse freely with God, must first abandon all carnal and immoderate defires, and get loofe from those intanglements, which clog and rivet down the foul to earth. They who will retain a fondness of any created being, by minding temporal things, shew, that they are content to fet up their rest, short of heaven and God himself. Set therefore thy affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for no man is sufficient for the service of two masters; nor canst thou love me and mammon both, Colos. iii. 2. Mat. vi. 24.

CHAP. LIX.

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The different motions of nature and grace.

CHRIST.

BE careful, my fon, to distinguish between nature and grace, and exactly to observe their different tendencies and prospects. For these are so very distant, so contrary to each other, and yet withal so intricate, that they require a spiritual and enlightened understanding, truly to discern them. In the general desire of good all mankind agree. This is the spur and spring of every word and action; but that which produces so very different effects

fects from the same original cause, is that men often mistake shadows for substance, and are imposed upon

by false appearances of good.

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Nature acts craftily, allures, enfnares, cheats those that attend to her stratagems, and proposes the gratifying her felf, for the end of all the does. Grace deals candidly and fincerely, complies with no evil, puts no cheat upon men, does all with regard to God, and refts, in him, as its supreme and only end. Nature declines death and fufferings, hates trouble and forrow, subjection and obedience: grace is exercised in perpetual mortification and self-denial; chuses to be over-ruled, to submit; nay, restrains even lawful and innocent liberties; does not affect dominion and fuperiority, but chuses to live in a state of humility and subjection; and esteems no hardship, no compliance, uneasy, for the sake of God and a good conscience. Nature is selfish, and always computes what profit every action may bring to the person that does it; grace overlooks all private gain, and labours chiefly to promote the publick good. Nature delights in honours and preferments, in a celebrated name, and the commendation of grace ascribes all the honour and praise to God, and thinks, that things done well, are well rewarded by his acceptance and approbation. Nature dreads ignominy and contempt; but grace accounts it matter of great joy to be exposed and vilified in a good cause. Nature is pleased with ease and indulgence, and bodily rest: Grace is ever active, and undertakes business and toil with chearfulness. Nature is charmed with beauty and curiofity, and disdains things that are mean, and vulgar and common: Grace is delighted with fuch as are plain and Nn2 low

low in the esteem of the world, disdains not those that are unpalatable, nor thinks her felf the worfe for the want of outward gaieties and ornaments. Nature aims at transitory enjoyments, is fond of wealth and increase, tenderly affected with losses and disappointments, and provoked to the last degree with insolence and reproach: Grace keeps eternal advantages in view, neglects the fading and perishing, bears losses with evenness of temper, endures contempt and scandal patiently. For these, she considers, are things of no momentous concern, to one whose heart and treasure are in heaven; a place, where they are fafe, and no misfortune can reach them. Nature is niggardly and close-handed, and chuses rather to receive than give; grace bountiful and kind; defpiting fordid gain and parfimony, content with a little, diffributes liberally and chearfully, and esteems it more blessed to give than to receive, Acts xx.

Nature inclines to creature-comforts, to fleshly delights, to worldly vanities and pomps, to wandring and unprofitable diversions: Grace fixes the heart upon God and goodness, concerns it self with the world as little as may be, hates fleshly lusts; checks and confines roving imaginations, and affects privacy and folitude. Nature is much delighted with fenfual pleasures: Grace feels no pleasure, but in God alone; and prefers that before all the delights that the objects of fense can administer. Nature does nothing without fome prospect of interest, and for every kindness expects as good or better returns, either of things in kind, or at least of favour and applause for its pretended generofity, and fets a very high value upon all the obligations it lays: grace defires no

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recompence in this world, but looks upon God as her reward; nor are the supplies and conveniences of life any farther of consideration with her, than as a comfortable subsistance in this world may be serviceable, in promoting and facilitating the endeavours after another.

Nature values herself upon a diffusive interest, and multitude of relations and friends, quality and noble blood; and therefore fawns upon, or favours men in power, courts and careffes the rich, commends, and is partial to, persons of the same condition, or opinion, or party: Grace is charitable and kind, even to enemies; is not exalted by great or numerous friendships; and thinks the descent and family of a man a very despicable thing, unless his virtue be as much more eminent than those of his inferiors, as his birth and rank is above theirs. Grace favours the poor rather than the rich, and is more concerned for the hard fortune of an innocent person, than of a great one; pays its respects to true intrinfick worth, not to the meer figns and trappings of it, which often only shew where it ought to be, not where it really is; encourages the good in virtue, instead of flattering and foothing up the mighty in their wickedness and folly; and labours indefatigably, to conform those who confess themselves God's children, to the likeness of their heavenly father's excellencies, by promoting all manner of piety and goodness.

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Nature is easily provoked to discontent, by indigent circumstances: Grace bears want and poverty with meekness and unwearied patience. Nature's ends and designs constantly centre in her self; but grace considers her original, and thinks, that all

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should return thither from whence at first it came: arrogates nothing to it felf; is not affuming, does not contend for praise or preference; is not dogmatical and peremptory in her own opinions, but, in all fearches after truth, fubmits her own reason and judgment, to the incomprehenfible wifdom of God. Nature affects to be knowing, to penetrate the profoundest and darkest mysteries, makes oftentation of all her new discoveries, and pretends to experiment and demonstration; and endeavours to distinguish her felf, to be thought wifer than the rest of the world, and would be extolled and admired for all that is spoken or written, or done: Grace thinks it not adviseable, to lay out time or thought upon new or unprofitable curiofities; but confiders, that the ruin of mankind is owing to that bufy defire of knowing what God thought fit to conceal from them; that this inquisitive pretending temper is a sprout from that old root of bitterness; that established truths may be depended upon, but new and fanciful notions are almost no sooner entertained, than they are disproved and exploded again; that men should therefore check that vain pleafure, which tickles their itching minds upon these occasions; abandon vain-glory, labour rather to conceal, than to publish their advantages; and make usefulness, and virtue, and God's honour the only end of all their knowledge and studies. For to him alone all thanks and praise must of necessity be due, who gives men all they have, of his own mere motion and free mercy.

And fuch is grace; a light fuperior to nature, which should direct and preside over it; the peculiar gift of God; the distinguishing character of his chosen; the sure pledge of everlasting salvation;

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 287

for it raises a man's affections from earth to heaven, and changes him from sless to spirit. And, because these two principles are acted by such different motives, proceed in such different methods, and pursue such differing ends; therefore, in proportion as nature is weakned and subdued; the larger measures of grace are imparted, the more mens virtues are improved, and the glorious image of God renew'd in their hearts, by holy and heavenly dispositions.

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CHAP. LX.

The weakness of corrupt nature, and efficacy of divine grace.

DISCIPLE.

Hou hast indeed, my God, created me in thy own image, after thy likeness, and commanded me to be holy, as thou thy felf art holy, Gen. i. 14. Pet. i. O grant me, I beseech thee, that favour and affistance, which, thy own word hath taught me, is fo important, fo abfolutely necessary to falvation; that I may subdue my own nature, whose inclinations are now fo degenerate, fo corrupt, that they have a strong and constant tendency to fin and For I feel and lament a law of fin in my body, warring continually against the law of my mind. Rom. vii. drawing me to compliance with the fleshly and fenfual appetite, and disabling me from any resolute resistance against its destructive motions; except thy divine grace pour in fresh succours, and help me to stand in the day of battle. Lord, I have need, not only of thy grace, but of very plentiful and powerful communications of it, to turn the bias of nature, which from my very infancy, preponde-

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rates to evil. For this infection is derived from the first parent of mankind, and is the punishment of his offence diffused upon his whole posterity; so that human nature, which came pure and good out of thy creating hand, is tainted and perverted, and all the motions, now remaining, attract the wrong

way, and incline to fin and earth.

The little power left in us to do good, is like a very small spark, covered with a great heap of embers; the light of reason clouded with a thick noifome mist of darkness and error. And, though by this all the distinctions of good and evil, of truth and falsshood are not utterly lost, yet the power of performing what our better reason approves, is gone; the light of truth is dim and feeble, and the integrity of our minds and affections is tainted, and diverted from attending to it impartially. Hence it comes to pass, that, though sometimes I am delighted with thy law in the inner man; and fully convinced, that the commandment is holy, just, and good, condemning wickedness, and warning me of the rocks and precipices, which, in steering my course through the waves of this troublesome world, I must be watchful to avoid ; yet fill with the flesh I serve the law of fin, Rom. vii. and find a greater disposition to follow luft and fense, than to be governed by reason and religion. Hence I do often feel the will to do well; but how to perform what I thus will, I find not. Hence I often make and repeat good refolutions with great fincerity; but, for want of thy affistance to counterpoise my infirmities, quickly fall from my stedfastness, and am beaten off with the very approach of difficulty and opposition. Hence I discern the way I should walk in; but when I am inform'd of

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 289 of my duty, and endeavour to raise my self above

the world and its temptations; a destructive innate weight draws me down again, and checks my soul

in its intended flights to heaven and thee.

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How absolutely needful then, my God, is thy grace to help me in beginning, in carrying on, and accomplishing every good work; fince without it I can do nothing, and yet with it can do even all things? Yet not I, Lord, but thou, who art in me, and strengthenest me. O gift truly divine! without which no defert of man, no endowments or qualifications of nature, are of any worth or fignificance at all! Sciences and arts, riches and power, beauty and strength, wit and eloquence, what are they, Lord, or what to be counted of, if not feconded, affisted, exalted and perfected by grace? These are accomplishments distributed promiscuously to good and bad; but grace is a gift peculiar to thy children and chosen, and such as renders the blessed men that have it worthy of eternal life and happiness. A gift so singularly excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the power of working miracles, nor the understanding of sublimest and mostabstruse mysteries, nor faith, nor hope, nor any other virtue or privilege, can recommend us to God without it.

O bleffed efficacy of grace, which makes the poor in spirit, rich in virtue and good works; and that man so enriched, humble and poor in spirit! Come heavenly gift, descend from above, shed thy self into my soul, and fill every dark corner there with light and comfort; awake me and shake off my soth, moisten the dry soil, and command fruitfulness out of that barren ground. Vouchsafe me,

O o Lord,

Lord, this bleffing; for this alone is fufficient for me, though thou should'st think fit to deny or withdraw all, that nature can either bestow, or is most fond of acquiring. Give me but this defence, and no temptation shall confound me, no calamity difmay or make me afraid: For this alone is strength and courage, wisdom and protection; stronger than all my enemies, and wifer than all human counsels and contrivances; the teacher of truth, the mistress of holy discipline, the light of the soul, the solace of troubles, the refolver of doubts; the balm of my wounds, the dispeller of melancholy, the banisher of fear, the cherisher of devotion, the parent of contrition, the spring of holy and penitent tears, and of all those streams that wash and purify polluted What am I without this, but dry stubble, a rotten trunk, dead to good works, useless and unprofitable, and fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot, and cast into the fire? Let therefore, O my God, I most humbly and heartily intreat, O let this grace and favour of thine always

Collect for xvii Sunday after Trinity.

Collect after

prevent and follow, and make me continually to be given to all good works; that in all my actions begun; continued and ended in thee, I may glorify thy holy name; and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life. Amen, Amen.

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CHAP. LXI.

Self-denial enforced from Christ's example.

CHRIST.

THE more, my son, thou forsakest thy self, the nearer approaches thou makest toward me. As the defires and intemperate love of things without, must be rejected, in order to the peace of one's own breast; so even the love of one's own felf must be laid aside, in order to a perfect union with God. Learn therefore absolutely to deny thy own will for mine, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me; I am the way, the truth and the life. Without the way can be no walking; without the truth no beneficial knowledge; without the life no living. Keep then in this way, for it is unalterable; believe in this truth, for it is infallible; hope for, and aspire to this life, for it is true, happy, and eternal life. Continue in my way, and thou halt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, that thou may'st inherit everlasting life. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments, Mat. xix. If thou wilt know the truth, believe my words. If thou wilt be perfect, fell that thou haft. If thou wilt fave thy life hereafter, despise there. If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, abase thyself upon earth. If thou desirest to reign with me, take up the cross with me. For none but they who imitate my cross, are in the right way to happiness and true glory.

Disciple.] This way, O Lord, is strait and rugged, such as the world declines, and cannot endure to

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think of. Therefore I beg, thy grace would enable me to despise the world, and dissent from the general Opinion of men, in compliance with thy command and example. For the servant is not greater than his lord, nor the disciple above his master, John xv. Let thy servant then be guided in thy steps, for with thee is life and true holiness. And all I read or hear from any other hand, gives me no refreshment, no true delight.

Christ.] If thou knowest these things, my son, happy art thou, if thou doest them, John xiii. For practice and not knowledge, shall inherit the blessing. He that keepeth my commandments, and doth them, he it is that toweth me, and I will love him in return, and manifest myself to him, and set him upon a throne with me, in my father's kingdom.

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Disciple.] Lord, make me a partaker of this gracious promise. The cross, which I have received from thy hand, I will bear with constancy even unto death. The life of a true christian is indeed one continu'd cross; but, since this is the way that leads to paradise, it is by no means sit, that I should depart from it, or repent of my holy resolutions, and good beginnings.

Come then, my christian brethren, let us advance boldly. Take courage, for Christ is with us; he does not only lead us on, but will enable us to follow him. For his sake we have taken up the cross, and for his sake we must persevere in bearing it. Behold, the king and captain of our salvation marches at our head, ready to sight our battles. Let us, like gallant soldiers, follow; let us abandon our fears and manfully prepare to die in the sield; and no stain our honour, and lose our crown, by deserting from

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 293 from that service, and those hardships, which he hath made our duty and our glory.

CHAP. LXII. Against being dejected with Temptations.

CHRIST.

J Udge not, my fon, of thy favour and acceptance with God, by such false measures, as the warmth of thy devotion, and the delight which refults from the discharge of thy duty. For I am better pleased with humility and patience, and deep contrition of heart, in a disconsolate and afficted state; than with an eager zeal, and the most exalted acts of an easy and prosperous piety. And whence is it, dost thou think, that every little scandal, which detracts from thy reputation, fo fenfibly affects thee? Were it yet more to thy disparagement, yet could it not be worth thy concern. This is not the first injury of this kind, nor is it like to be the last, if thou livest longer among men. And what is now new or strange, ought not to furprize thee. I know thy courage and pretended bravery, while danger keeps its distance. Thou canst discourse like a philosopher and a christian, and give excellent advice to thy friends, when they labour under any diffress; but when their case happens to be thy own, and some unexpected calamity comes home to thee; thy prudence and resolution forfake thee quite, and thou standest no less in need of the counsel and support, which thou wert wont fo freely to impart to others.

Let this experiment remind thee of thy own frailty, which, by such Instances, appears not to be proof against the slightest misfortunes. For even these instances

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stances are greatly for thy advantage, and bring thee to a right and perfect understanding of thy own weak condition. Grow wifer at least at thy own expence: and as thy calmer reason shews it ought to be, so let thy behaviour manifest, that these tender resentments of temporal evils are banished out of thy mind. If thou canst not entertain adversity with absolute indifference, yet let it not drive thee to defpondency and wicked distrust; and, however the first onset may disturb thee, yet rally quickly, and let it not long overpower thee. And tho' perhaps thou art not arrived to that perfection of counting it all for, when thou fallest into divers temptations; Jam. i. Thou canst not be excused from undergoing them with meekness, and resignation, and patience. If thou art not yet got even thus far, but fome indecent reflections rife up in thy mind; yet let not this fecret indignation break out into irreverent expressions, but set a watch upon thy tongue, and keep the door of thy lips. Pfal. cxli. & xxxix. Refolve at least, that thy mouth shall not offend; and though thy heart be hot within thee, yet let not any passionate complaints burst out, which may cast imputations upon the honour of God, impeach the instice and goodness of providence, or give offence to thy weaker brethren. For by thus manning and guarding well the outworks, thy inward commotions will in time be composed; thy forrow by degrees shall turn into joy, and the favour and mercy of God, be inclined to relieve and comfort thee, in recompence to thy reverence and submission to his good pleasure.

As I live, faith the Lord, I will help thee speedily, and comfort them who earnestly seek me, who put their

Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 295 trust in my salvation. Call up thy christian fortitude, and fink not under thy burthen, but prepare for greater trials. If thy former troubles have overwhelmed thy spirits, prevailed over thy temper and thy virtue; let not the remembrance of our former trials discourage thee. The Lord knoweth whereof thou art made, he remembreth that thou art but dust: Psal. ciii. a man, and not God; flesh and not angel or unbodied spirit; how canst thou then expect to continue in an undifturb'd state of goodness? How should thy virtue be above the shocks and severities of temptation, when even the angels kept not their first estate, and man in paradise so soon fell from innocence? I am thy fole protection, who raise the souls dejected with forrow, preferve those who acknowledge and bewail their own weakness, and glorify with my felf the humble christians, who are ashamed of their follies and miscarriages.

Disciple.] Bleffed be thy mercy, for the gracious words, which drop from thy mouth, foft as the gentle dew, and fweeter than honey and the honeycomb. What would become of me, in the extremity of my distress and anguish of my soul, did not thy promifes and feafonable instructions refresh and comfort me? But be it as thou wilt; for I cannot think it any great matter, how long or boifterous my voyage is, so thou at last conduct me safe to that peaceful haven, where good men are at rest. Let my afflictions be never so great, so thou grant a happy issue, and turn my sufferings to good effect. But my condition in this life adverse or prosperous, no prosperity will profit, no adversity harm me, but in proportion to the state in which I die. And if I go well out of the world, my continuance in it cannot

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be so troublesome, that I should have cause to repent or complain. Order my affairs then as thou pleasest; but always, O my God, remember me for good. Lead me in the right and ready way to thy kingdom, dispose all my actions towards the attainment of salvation, and let me so pass through things temporal, that I finally lose not the things eternal. Amen.

CHAP. LXIII.

Against prying into things too high for us, and pretending to fathom the depths of God and providence.

CHRIST.

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D O not, my fon, take upon thee to dispute, or determine any thing concerning abstructe and difficult Points; nor too curiously enquire into those mysterious dispensations, which God hath purposely concealed from thee. Concern not thy felf about the amazing distributions of grace or Providence; why one man is forfaken and in disfavour with God, another fo furprizingly indulged by him; this person exercifed with afflictions and forrows, or that fo gently dealt with, fo unaccountably exalted. These are things out of thy fphere: and all the parts and penetration, the acutest wit, and acquired improvements of man, are much too short and feeble, to enter into the reasons of the divine counsels. If therefore fuch curiofities return upon thee, look upon them as the fuggestions of the devil, by which he labours to disquiet and unsettle thee. If man, impertinently bufy, require a folution of fuch difficulties, content thy felf with that general answer of the prophet: righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy Judgments; Jer. xii. 1. The Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; his rightteousness

of the Imitation of Jesus Christ. 297 tousness standeth like the strong Mountain, Psa. xixisix'd and immoveable, eminent and conspicuous and his Judments are like the great Deep: Ps. xxxvi. 7. a vast and dark abyss, such as we cannot see to the bottom of, or fathom with the short line of a finite understanding.

My methods and dealings are to be admired, not fawcily criticized upon, by my own creatures. For no creature can have a capacity proportioned to them; and what men cannot comprehend, they should not

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As little ought they to enquire and dispute concerning the merits or the preference of good men: Which of the faints excel in virtue, or is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. For these are questions, in which men are no ways concerned, fuch as engender strife and debate, and turn to no good account. They cherish arrogance and pride, envy and faction, while men break into parties, and each contends for the preheminence of him, whose order and patronage he is devoted to, or whom his own vain imagination inclines him most to honour. The effect of this is very visible, and the mischiefs, that spring from such an impertinent zeal, exceeding numerous and lamentable: The controversy, neither possible to be decided, nor worth deciding, if it were. And, if those saints have any knowledge of what passes here below, this indifcreet and partial zeal cannot but be highly displeasing to them. For I am not a God of contention and faction, but of order, and peace, and love. These are the genuine product of true modesty and humility, of such as esteem others better than themselves; but inconsistent with that bold assuming temper, which is restless and discontented,

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if any other be preferred before them. It may be, affection and honest zeal may dispose some men to be more liberal in their respect on this or that side of the differing parties; but do not fuch confider, that fuch affection is not the effect of grace or religion, but merely of human infirmity? These are such prepoffessions as I can never be capable of; for all the faints are equally mine. My hand made them men, my affifting grace made them faints; I enriched them with virtues, and crowned them all with glory. I know what each have done, what occasions they had, what improvements they made. I foreknew them before time was; they chose not me, but I them; and fingled them out of the common mul-I drew them with the cords of love and mercy, conduced them thro' great variety of trials and afflictions; fustain'd them with uncommon comforts and recruits, enabled them to persevere, and rewarded the constancy my self had given. I know the first and last; and my fatherly, my inexpressible affection extends to them all. For all are instruments of my praise and glory, so many monuments and eternal trophies of my goodness; freely advanced to what they are, by my bounty and favour, without any right or antecedent merit of their own. therefore, who despises the least of these, is guilty of disrespect to the greatest; for this contempt reflects at last on me, the author of their virtues and their happiness; and therefore in me alone should all the honour, pretended to be paid to them, centre. Their interests and properties are no longer seperate; for charity hath made them one, and knit them into the same mistical body, whose honours, and advantages, and inclinations, and joys, are inseperably the fame

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same. Nay, which is the utmost perfection of charity, they all conspire in loving me more than themselves, or any merits or respects of their own; for, being in that happy state exalted above themselves, they are entirely taken up with the love and honour of God. This is their happiness and utmost end. Nothing can divert them to meaner prospects, no mixture of self love comes in betwixt, to damp

the pure flames of this love everlafting.

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Away then with these vain curiofities, these eager disputes, concerning the condition of the Bleffed; which bertay a prevalence of carnal and fenfual appetites, fuch as have no notions higher than particular gains and separate interests! Nature and partiality incline fuch dispositions, to act, and defire, and love, and hate, upon private and personal considerations; and then they fondly transfer the same idea's and the same behaviour, from earthly to heavenly objects. Alas! the difference is the widest in the world, and nothing in nature fo distant, as the foolish imaginations of such novices in matters of another world, from those juster apprehensions, which minds, enlightned from above, entertain upon these occasions. Be not too curious then, my son, in matters above thy capacity; but rather let it be thy care and constant thought, how thou may'st be found, tho' it be but the least, in the kingdom of heaven. For couldit thou understand all mysteries and all knowledge; couldst thou distinctly view the several orders and places of each angel and spirit above; yet what would this avail, farther than as it excited in thee less for thy own, and greater, zeal for my honour? The man who feriously reflects upon the multitude of his own fins, and the defects and

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worthlesness of his own virtues, how few, how poot, how far short they are of the perfection of those bright examples heretofore, employs his mind upon a subject, which God likes much better than such empty speculations of them who have set those ex-

amples.

This is a controversy, which they never trouble themselves about. For they ascribe nothing to any deferts of their own, but acknowledge the whole of what they have and are, to be the fole effect of my infinite liberality and love. And their happiness and honour is compleat, by the joy they take in the fruition of God and his glory. The more exalted any of these are, the more modest they are; the more dear, and the more like to me. Thus much is intimated by that vision, where they are said to cast their crowns at the feet of God, and falling down upon their faces before the throne, and before the lamb, to worship him that liveth for ever and ever, Rev. x.

How abfurd is it to fee men zealoufly contending who is greatest in the kingdom of God, who are not folicitous in the mean while to know, what much more nearly concerns them, whether they shall have any place at all there themselves? And yet to be least there is to be great, for even the least are sons and heirs of God. A little one shall become a thousand, and the child shall die a hundred years old, but the sinner of an hundred years old shall be accursed. Isa, lx. 22. --- lxv. 20. When the disciples enquired who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, this was the answer made to that demand: Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whospever shall humble himself as this little child, the Same

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CO w] fame shall be greatest in the kingdom of beaven. Matth. xviii. Wo to them who disdain to imitate the humility and meekness of little chldren! for strait and low is the gate of heaven, as the towrings of ambition, and swellings of bloated vanity can never stoop to, or enter at. Wo to the rich, who have their consolation in this world, for while the poor are admitted into paradise, they shall stand weeping and wailing without! But rejoice, ye meek, and humble, and poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; if ye heartily embrace and obey the truth, and be rich in patience and good dispositions.

CHAP. LXIV.

God is all the good man's hope and confidence.

DISCIPLE.

I N whom, O Lord, is my hope, while here below? or what, of all the things under heaven, can minister peace and comfort to my soul? Truly my hope is even in thee, and my joy and trust in thy mercy alone. When were my affairs in ill condition with thee? Or what can prevent my being exquifitely miserable without thee? Poverty for thy sake is infinitely rather to be chosen, than all the riches and greatness in the world, in exchange for thy favour; and earth and exile with that favour more blisful, than heaven without the fruition of thee. For heaven is heaven by thy bleffed presence; and where that does not refide, all is death and the grave, and hell, Thou art my defire and my portion, and therefore to thee my fighs and groans, and cries and prayers, continually ascend. I have no other stay or refuge, who can fend feafonable and fuitable relief to all my dangers

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dangers and necessities; but thou alone art my hope and trust, my effectual comforter, and most faithful friend.

Others pursue their own private ends and advantages, but thou feekest my improvement and happiness, and orderest all things for my good. Even my temptations and afflictions are appointed to do me fervice. These are the methods, by which the Fidelity of thy chosen is brought to the test; and even the harsher dispensations ought as much to engage my affections, and excite my gratitude and praise, as the most refreshing comforts, and most defired prosperity. In thee therefore, O my God, I repose my foul; thou art my fanctuary, where I desposite the burthen of all my griefs and troubles. For there alone can they and I be safe, fince all things else are feeble and uncertain, neither able, nor always difposed, to comfort or protect me. Friends cannot do what they wish; great men will not, or cannot help; the wife, without thee mistake their measures; books are but infignificant diversion, and yield no folid confolation; wealth cannot buy ease and peace of mind; fortresses and coverts cannot hide me from calamity, unless thou be with those friends, and strengthen those counsellors, and instruct me by those books, and affift me in the use of wealth, and guard that strong retreat. For peace and happiness are entirely in thee. Thou art the end, the fum, the fource of all good; the perfection of life, the depth of wisdom and knowledge: And hope in thee is the furest, the most sensible support thy servants can have, in the miscries of this mortal life.

To thee therefore lift I up my eyes, O father of mercies and lover of men. Comfort my foul in trou-

ble, and purify it with thy grace, that it may be a clean and holy habitation, such as thy glorious majesty does not disdain to dwell in. Let no Impurity be lest in this temple; but cleanse it thoroughly from every thing, which may offend those eyes, that cannot behold iniquity or uncleanness. Look upon me in thy great goodness, and, after the multitude of thy mercies, hear the Prayer of thy poor servant, now wandring in a distant, and desolate wilderness. O keep my soul and deliver me, lead me safe thro' this vale of sorrow and danger, and conduct me, by the way of peace and holiness, to my own home, even my heavenly country, the land of promise, the presence and eternal fruition of my God. Amen.

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IMITATION

OF

FESUS CHRIST.

Of the Lord's Supper.

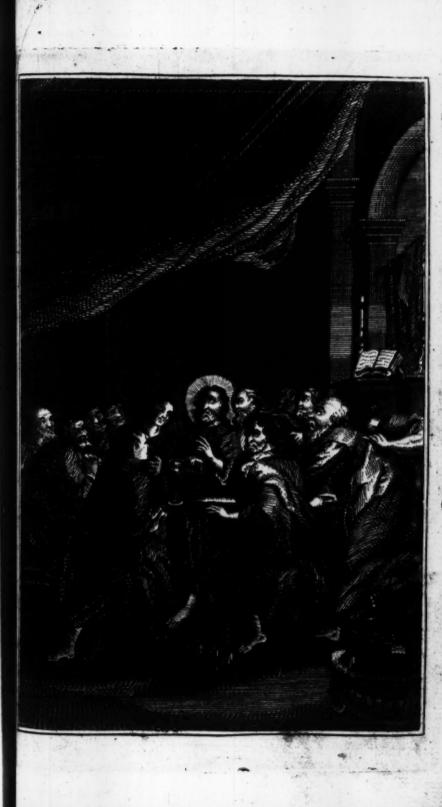
CHAP. I.

The reverence due to this holy sacrament.

The INVITATION.

CHRIST.

OME unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, Mat. xi. 28. The bread that I will give, is my flesh; which I will give for the life of the world, John vi. 51. Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me, 1 Cor. ix. 24. He that



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that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him, John vi. 56. The Words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,

John 63.

Disciple.] These, blessed Jesus, are thy words, on which my foul fecurely rests it self; because my faviour who is eternal truth, hath spoken them. These the gracious and condescending Invitations, which I find interspersed in holy scripture, as occasions offered for making them. These therefore I will receive with holy gratitude, with humble but entire confidence; and engrave them upon my foul in deep and indelible characters. For tho' they be thine, as the author; yet do I claim a property in them, and justly call them mine too, as a person, for whose benefit and salvation thou wert pleased to utter them. Most gladly therefore will I receive them at thy mouth, that the authority of the divine speaker may make the more effectual Impres-And stupid I must be beyond imagination, if encouragement fo fweet, fo kind, do not awaken, and very fenfibly affect me. But alas! at the same time, that thy call inclines me to come, my own grievous transgressions sly in my face, and the terrors of a guilty conscience keep me away. Thy goodnefs, I own, imps my wings, and bids me boldly attempt the raifing my foul to heaven and happiness; but I feel the bitter remembrance of my fins checking those flights, laying me prostrate upon earth, reproaching my better hopes, and nobler intentions, with presumption; and ever depressing my mind, with the intolerable burden of heinous and numberless offences, which render me unworthy of the least of all thy mercies.

In

In this perplexity of thought thou hast most feafonably interposed with thy reviving comforts; haft made that faith and trust a virtue and a duty, which I should have shunned as a crime, and, conscious of my own vileness, durst not have entertained. commandest me to raise my dejected looks, and direct my steps to heaven; and I feriously defire, (as who indeed can but defire?) life and glory everlafting. Thou exhortest me to begin to live immediately, by taking the fweet foretaftes of immortality, in that bread, which is the food of fouls. kind invitation therefore I earnestly attend to, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. O harmonious found in the ears of a finner! How joyful is the news to a poor, loft, impotent wretch! One, who, in a due sense of his own vileness, thinks even the meanest of thy gifts, which conduce to his bodily fustenance, too good for him. To be invited to eat of thy most blessed body, and admitted to partake of the lively figures of thy divine blood; the commemorations of thy death, and fure pledges of falvation! Lord! What am I, that I should thus be permitted to approach thee? Nay rather, that thou should'st come to me, and dwell under my roof? O unspeakable condescension! O unexampled kindness! Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, and yet thou vouchfafest to take up thy abode with man, that is a worm? The angels are not pure in thy fight, and yet thou fayest to wretched finners, Come unto me, ye that travel, and are beavy laden.

I find my felf at a loss, whence such astonishing kindness should proceed, or what may be the meaning of so friendly an invitation. My misdeeds testi-

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fy against me, and I am but too sensible, that no merit of mine could induce my Lord to make it. So far from that, that, even now it is made, I know not with what face I can either approach my God and Saviour, or bring him to me, or hope to keep him there; him, whom I have fo often, fo grievoufly provoked, fo justly made my enemy for ever. But, were there no demerits of my own to discourage this attempt, yet, who am I, that the majesty of heaven and earth should stoop so low, as to enter under my roof? Behold, angels and archangels, principalities and powers fall down and worship thee: Behold, the brightest faints, and spirits of just men made perfect, tremble at thy presence, and yet thou fayest, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are beaby laden. Had this been spoke by any mouth but thine, men could not have believed it. Had not thy command inspired this confidence, finners durst not have attempted to move towards thee, but would have rather used their utmost industry, to fee from the presence of their master and judge. But be it fo; we are commanded to come to thee; and thou vouchfafest to come to us. Yet what solennity, what preparation, can be fufficient for thy teception? Noah, that righteous person, employed a hundred years in building an ark by God's direction, for the faving himself and a very few souls besides; and how shall I be qualified, by the application of an hour or two only, to entertain the maker of the universe, and meet him with that humble reverence, which is due to so terrible, so glorious a creator, from the vileft and most unworthy of all his creatures? Thy servant Moses admitted into familiar conversation with thee, by a privilege not Qq2 imparted

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imparted to the rest of mankind, framed an ark of cedar-wood, and overlaid it with pure gold, to be a fit repository for the tables of the law: And shall I, wretched rotten trunk, take upon me without ceremony to receive the almighty maker and giver of that law? Solomon, the wisest of princes, spent seven years in building a magnificent temple to the honour of thy name; eight years were taken up in the dedication of it; a thousand peace-offerings were then facrificed upon the new erected altar; and the ark of the covenant with found of trumpet, and other holy folemnities, was conducted into the place appointed to receive it: And how unlike to these great faints am I, dust and ashes, chief of sinners and meanest of men? How shall I pretend to invite thee my God into my house, who am so far from spending a number of years or days, that I can very hardly afford one poor half hour? Nay, would to God that wretched remnant of one poor half hour were but employed, as attentively, as devoutly, as it ought to be, to provide thee a clear and acceptable apartment, in this homely cottage of my heart, How eager, O my God, how persevering was the zeal of those ancient worthies? How cold, how short is mine, when I set my self to prepare for meeting and receiving thee? My thoughts, alas! are very feldom confistent, but a thousand wandrings and impertinent distractions intrude upon me; and hardly can I collect the powers of my foul into fo composed a frame, as becomes our more immediate addresses to thee. I am not unmindful of thy prefence then, more peculiar than at other times; I reflect upon the indecency and fin of fuffering my heart to divide it felf; I know, that when an honour

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so great is intended me, as that of receiving the Lord of men, and angels, it ought to enlarge and devote. its whole capacity to thee. And yet I cannot fix and fill it with this one object; but, in despight of all my endeavours and felf-reproaches, frailty will

prevail.

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Nay, the same care and reverence were much too little, where the dignity of the thing is fo much greater. For what comparison can there be between an ark with its ceremonial fymboles, and the mystical body of my bleffed faviour, with all the wondrous effects of his paffion? How poor and despicable were those legal facrifices, whose greatest excellence and commendation was, that they typified, and foretold, that one only perfect and fufficient facrifice upon the cross, which in this facrament we at once commemorate, and apply the virtue of to our felves? If then the patriarchs and prophets heretofore express'd their zeal and devotion, by all the marks of reverence and profound respect, to those figures of the divine presence, and shadows of good things to come; shall I be negligent in my preparations to meet my God himself; shall I not indeed as much exceed the great folicitude and pious affection, which kings and peafants, rich and poor, univerfally express'd; as the spiritual participation of my Lord's body and blood, and the most precious pledges of his love and my falvation, excel the carnal dispensation of a figurative tabernacle, and the very distant and dark fignifications of future bleffings? They adored the representation; and shall I disregard the substance, the end, the perfection, of all the levitical institutions, the fum of all Gods mercies, and man's hopes? If even David thought it no Disparagement to his royall

all character, to lay out his time, his study, his strength, in the service of the tabernacle; to compose pfalms for the worship of God, to string his own harp, and himself join and preside in the Concert: hav, even to dance before the ark, when brought up to its Place, and, by his own example, to teach his Subjects to exert their utmost might, and employ every faculy of body and Soul, in expressing their zeal and joy: What holy gladness then is due, what inflamed devotion to him, whom David in spirit called Lord? What fongs of praise and thanks should adorn that folemn feaft, where Christ exhibits to us the heavenly manna, the food of fouls? How shall we labour to omit no testimony of our reverence, no fign of honour this king of heaven does us, when he vouchfafes to come home, and dwell in our hearts; and, by the confecrated elements, verily and indeed to give and unite himself to every faithful foul?

See with what eager zeal vain men make long pilgrimages, and fly to the remotest corners of the world, only to gain a fight of the boafted reliques of fome celebrated faints; to be entertained with long accounts of miracles, to kifs a filken rag, or prostrate themselves before a bone set in gold! But alas! were all the legends these fond men give credit to, most true, yet what is here, that can deserve their expensive pretences to fanctity, or command veneration, in any degree comparable to that faving and mystical presence of God himself upon the altar? The poor effects of such mistaken zeal are but too manifest. Men generally go for curiofity and diverfion, not for the improvement of their Minds; and they return accordingly: Better in no respect, except di

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except in having feen a thing much talk,d of, which they never had feen before. 'Tis to be hoped, but few are fo blind, fo wretchedly deluded, to imagine, that fuch penances and painful travels can avail there any thing, without true contrition, and ferious reformation of life. And where these are, much more fubstantial advantages may be had a great deal nearer home. For lo! the King of faints invites us, he gives the fure and bleffed fruits of righteoufness and falvation to all, who worthily receive him. An invitation, in compliance with which, levity and fenfuality, a wandring head, or a roving humour, have no part, but all is done, by the wife and wellweighed grace of a stedfast faith, the comfortable asfurances of a devout hope, and the affectionate zeal of a fincere and holy love.

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O mighty maker of the world, whom though we plainly fee in all thy works of wonder, yet thou thy felf remainest invisible; how astonishing are thy dispensations to the sons of men? How sweet, how comfortable, how full of efficacy, yet still how unaccountable to fense and reason, are the methods, by which thou art pleafed to communicate thy felf to the faithful in the bleffed facrament? Here thy chosen and worthy fervants partake of that heavenly food, which nourishes their fouls to life immortal; while reprobate and bold intruders take empty elements, void of spiritual substance, and saving power. This is a mystery above our comprehension. kindles in us holy zeal, and engages our devotest affections. And by receiving creatures, in themselves of mean and common efficacy, we find our weaknesses strengthned, our decays recruited, and our love of thee and virtue strangely heightned and con-

firmed. Who can express, who can conceive, that hidden, that amazing distinction made in this holy supper; whose graces and good effects are so liberally distributed to the faithful; and yet unbelievers and impenitent men have no portion, no experience at all of them? Who can discover those mystical methods, by which spiritual grace is conveyed with bodily sustenance? How bread and wine could be made instruments of strengthning the foul; of purging away the blemishes and reproaches of nature; healing her deformities and diseases; taking out the stains of fin and vicious habits contracted by converfing with an impious world; fubduing furious passions; rectifying and moderating irregular defires; invigorating both the body and mind of feeble finners at once.

Such is the new Life, and health, and sprightly vigor, which good and godly men experimentally find upon these occasions. And who then can sufficiently lament the general lukewarmness, the cold neglect, the fenfless stupidity of mankind upon this occasion? How regardless are they of Christ? How hardly prevailed upon to accept their own mercy, their fanctification, their redemption, in the ways prescribed by himself for imparting these glorious advantages? How rudely do they turn their backs upon that feast, which creates joy in heaven, and preserves earth and its inhabitants from misery and ruin! Oh! the wretched blindness, the inflexible obstinacy and hardness of mens hearts, which will not fee, or feeing, will not value so inestimable benefits; which turn their very happiness into an occasion of destruction, by suffering the frequent opportunities, and the very easiness of attaining ment

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these precious privileges, to bring them into a general disesteem; which make the greatness of their master's love, the abundant provision for their health and support, a pretence for starving in the midst of

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For I can scarce persuade my self, but that, if this holy facrament could be had in one place, and from one fingle hand only, men would with eager zeal repair thither, and vast crowds of people strive to partake of fo rare a bleffing. But now, when every church, and every festival, which every priest, and almost every lord's day, exhibits this delicious food, brings it home to our doors, and offers it to as many as are religiously and devoutly disposed to accept the gracious tenders; when every fermon exhorts, intreats, conjures us to be thus happy; we turn our backs, and flight the cheap, the easy favour. Yet manifest it is, that the kindness of our Lord is not the less, but much the greater, for putting the terms of our falvation within our own power, and leaving the whole blame and condemnation at our own doors, I we refuse to take what without our fault we can never want. And shall we then proceed to dislike and disdain our greatest blessings? To think them less valuable for being more common? No, blessed lefus! We will acknowledge thy unspeakable bounty; we will most thankfully confess thee the good shepherd, who hast provided such rich sustenance for by sheep, and leadest them out into fat pastures. Bessed be thy eternal mercy, who vouchsafest to give by body, not only for, but to thy poor fervants in his disconsolate state: Who not content to sacrifice once upon the cross, offerest it daily in the facrament; and hast silenced all the fears and melancholy Rг misgivings

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misgivings of our own guilt and unworthiness, by that most tender and compassionate, that most extensive and universal invitation; come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden with the burden of your fins, and I will refresh you.

CHAP. II.

The love of God to the foul manifested in this sacrament.

CHRIST.

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Ehold, Lord, thus encouraged, thus invited, I come; but I do not prefume to do fo, trufting in my, own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. I feel, alas! my weaknesses and wants: and betake my felf to thee for relief; fick and difeafed, I fly to the physician of souls; hungry and thirsty to this fountain of living water, and bread of life, poor and needy, to the bountiful king of heaven; a fervant to his kind master; a creature to his compassionate creator, who hateth nothing that he hath made; and a forlorn disconsolate wretch, to thee, the holy, the eternal, the only comforter. whence is this to me that my God should vouchfafe to come unto me? Or who am I, that thou should'st thus liberally communicate to me thy own felf? How shall a wicked sinner dare to appear before thee? Or how can'ft thou, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, endure to make fuch condescending approaches to a foul polluted with fin and with uncleanness? Thou seest my very inward parts, and knowest I have nothing in me that is good, nothing to invite such mercy, nothing fit for the reception of fo pure, fo glorious a majesty. I will therefore mol

most humbly confess my own vileness, and thy unspeakable goodness; I will most thankfully praise, and admire, and adore thy marvellous love, and exceeding abundant grace. For this is purely thy own act. Nothing on my part could deferve, nothing could move thee to it. The more unworthy I am, the more conspicuous is thy goodness; the more amazing thy mercy and condescension. Since therefore thou art pleased to stoop so low, be it unto me according to thy word. Since thou hast thought fit to command my approach, I will most gladly testify my ready obedience; and only supplicate, that my own finfulness may not render me odious in thy fight, nor frustrate these inestimable mercies to me.

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O fweetest, kindest faviour, what humble Revetence, what devout thankfulness can be great enough? what praise can be sufficiently expressive of that love, which admits fo poor, fo miferable a wretch to the participation of those divine mysteries, the Dignity whereof no tongue of men. or angels can worthily fet forth? But when I thus address my Lord, and am allowed fuch intimate familiarities with him, what fort of reflections ought to fill my breaft? To approach thee with all the profound respect due upon fuch occasions, is impossible. I will therefore supply my want of ability by the earnestness of my Zeal; and most hambly befeech thee, to accept those hearty defires of the inestimable benefit, by which my foul and all its taculties, thirst and pant most impatiently after thee and thy righteousness. When thou art the subject of my mediations the matter is too vast for regular thought; the idea too dazzling and bright for a finite understanding; and I quickly feel my felf lost in wonder and astonishment. I will therefore

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therefore turn my eyes inward, and entertain my self with the less pleasing indeed: but no less profitable, prospect of my own unworthiness; laying my soul low before thee, and from the sense, how little, how mere a nothing, how much worse than nothing I am, will take the measure of thy greatness, and form ideas of thy infinite goodness. I praise thee, O my God, from the bottom of my heart; and extol thy name for evermore. I despise and detest my felf; and with the deepest humility put my soul into thy protection that thy favour and grace may exalt me, and make this despicable wretch something, who, without thy

mercy, is less than nothing.

O the wide extremes! O the unmeasurable distance! between God, the essence and perfection of holiness, and man, the very abstract of filth and sin! yet does this God extend compassion, and look down with pity on those who are not worthy so much as to list up their eyes to him. yet he comes to us; and delights to be with us promises to dwell with us; calls, and intreats, and importunes us, to sit and eat deliciously at his table. He invites the naked and hungry, the beggars and vagabonds, to his own table Psal. lxxviii.; feeds them with angels food, feasts them with the bread of heaven, even that living bread which came down from beaven, on purpose to give life to the world. John vi.

Oh! Whence could all this mighty love proceed; what account can be given of fuch wonderful condescension, such tender regards, to lost unworthy creatures? What thanks, what praise, what humble adoration do those so highly obliged, so particularly favoured creatures owe in return for them? How wise, how merciful, was thy design in the first institu-

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tion of this holy supper? How rich, how delightful a banquet hast thou prepared for thy guests, by ordering thy own body and blood for the mystical entertainment of the faithful? How astonishing are the operations of thy grace and power! How incomprehensible the methods of fulfilling the most true promise! Thou spakest the word in the beginning and all things were created; and by the same almighty word, thou commandest bread and wine,

and they nourish souls to life eternal.

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This is indeed a subject, contrived for the exercise. not fo much of our reason as of our faith. We are not able to account for the mighty efficacy of elements. in their own nature contemptible and weak. We know not how that God, whom the whole heavens cannot contain, should dwell in the hearts of men: But this we know, that thou hast promised, by and with this facrament, to enter into, and abide in, all worthy receivers; and thy truth is fufficient to filence and vanquish all those imaginary difficulties, which cavilling and curious men form to themselves about Come then, and enter, and live, and reign in me for ever cleanse and adorn with thy grace the place of thy peculiar refidence; preferve my heart and body free from all impurity, and remove far away whatever may be offensive to thee let this veffel of mine be constantly possessed in fanctification and honour; that, with a peaceful and spotless conscience, I may frequently approach, and devoutly receive these adorable mysteries, which thou hast appointed, for the comfort and falvation of those, whom the king of heaven delights to honour; and for pious and lively commemorations of thy own most bitter. but most meritorious and precious death.

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And thou, my foul, rejoice and be exceeding glad for so noble a favour, so heavenly a refreshment, so rich a consolation, to support and sweeten thy pasfage through this vale of tears and misery. For, every time thou attendest these holy mysteries, thou dost spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; thou dost act as it were over again the work of thy redemption, and with great effect partake of thy faviour's merit and fufferings. For his love continues always the fame, and the excellence and worth of his propitiation is an inexhauftible fpring of mercv. Come therefore hither with new exalted zeal, enlarge thy heart and its defires, and doubt not, but thou shalt, at every approach, return with fresh and plentiful accessions of grace. Let not the frequency abate thy devotion; for this favour should always feem great, this feast always honourable, and the delights of it always new. And, by the force of pious meditation, the mystery will affect thy wondring mind at every repetition, as if the fon of God were just at that moment born from the womb of his immaculate mother; as if thy fuffering redeemer were in that instant labouring under all his agonies; and thy own eyes beheld him hanging, and bleeding, and dying, on the crofs.

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CHAP, III.

The benefit of communicating often.

DISCIPLE.

Behold, I come to thee, O Lord, fervently defiring to partake of thy promife, to be enriched with thy gifts, and feasted with that heavenly banquet, which thy compassion hath prepared for hungry

hungry and drooping souls. I know, O Lord, in thee is all I need, all I can desire; my health and safety, my hope and strength, my honour and glory. Quicken therefore and cherish the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O blessed Jesus, do I list up my soul. It is my earnest desire to receive thee with a becoming reverence and devotion. The height of my ambition is to bring thee home to my house; and, with Zaccheus of old, to be blessed, and reckoned by thee among the true spiritual sons of Abrabam. My soul desires to be fed and strengthened by thy body, and my heart to be entirely knit and in-

separably united to thee.

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Give me but thy felf, and whatever else thou withholdest, I am satisfied. For all things besides are miserable comforters, and rather aggravate than abate my wretchedness. Without thy consolations I am not able to subsist: And therefore I feel an abfolute necessity of coming to thee often for fresh supplies of grace and strength. My spirits languish and fink, and, if I fast too long, I perish for want of feafonable relief from this heavenly fustenance. Thy bowels heretofore yearned over the multitudes, who came from far to hear thy faving doctrine, and to be healed of their bodily distempers. Thou would'st not fend them away empty, but wer't pleased to feed them by a miracle, left they should faint by the way. Mat. xv. Extend the same compassion towards me, and let this facrament fustain my fainting foul, in this wilderness, barren and remote from any true comfort. For thou art the fweet, the reviving food of finking and weary spirits; and they, who worthily partake of this repast, are nourished unto life eterval. I am fadly fentible of my infirmities, and frequent

quent relapses into sin, and how urgent my occasions are for these repeated refreshments. I quickly cool after my warmest resolutions; my purposes of goodness sicken and languish apace; and these decays must end in spiritual death, did not my prayers, my self-examinations, my confessions and holy sorrows, preparatory to this holy seast, often return: did not this divine sustenance cleanse and renew my affections; confirm my purposes of doing well, excite and instance my zeal and love for God and good works. Obstinate fasting would not more certainly quench all my Vital heat, and destroy my body; than too long abstinence from this spiritual food will waste and quite extinguish all the operations of grace in my soul

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and all its powers of living well.

I find and heartily bewail, a fatal tendency to evil; and my experience, from my very cradle, shews me, how strongly I incline to fin, and fall from bad to worse, except a remedy from above check this indisposition, and succour and support me from plunging into hell. This holy communion is that remedy. It calls back my wandering steps, prevents my falling by relapse or neglect, and strengthens me in grace and goodness. And if, even in my studied and most laboured devotions, I am so often cold, so lukewarm at the best; how frozen should I be, how insenfible and dead, were these helps laid aside, and no fuch application used to warm and quicken me? Though therefore my life be not so perfect, that I am always in a fit disposition to communicate; yet it shall be my care, at solemn and proper seasons, not to lose the benefit of these holy mysteries, or ever to refuse my own happiness. For this is the fovereign balm of wounded conciences; the great prefervative

preservative of decaying souls, the chearing comfort of the faithful, bemoaning their present state of banihment, and groaning earnestly for a reasone from the afflictions and infirmities of those mortal bodies, which thy providence hath for a time confined them. And the oftener they thus remember their God, the greater is that affliction, and humble devoion, with which they court and embrace their beloved spouse and Lord.

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But oh! how amazing is thy love? and what is man whom thou vouchfafest to visit, when the great God, the creater of the world, and father of the pirits of all flesh, disdains not to descend into a poor bul, and fill the hungry wretch with this bread of le. Happy that breaft, which is thus honoured, and unspeakable the joy, with which it overflows! low glorious a mafter, how agreeable a guest, how pleafant a companion, how faithful a friend, how leautiful, how honourable, how charming a hufand, does it entertain and embrace? Let heaven and arth, and all their boafted exellencies, keep filence before him, for if I have my Jesus, I have all. For have him, from whom all other good things derive heir excellence; and their borrowed precarious peractions can minister no joy, can make no happiness, without this great original. They in themselves are wthing, they are but what he made them; and he ame is more, incomparable more and better, than all hat ever was, or could be made.

CHAP. IV.

The pleasures of devout communion.

DISCIPLE.

Revent me, I most humbly beseech thee, my Lord and my God, with the bleffings and grad of thy holy spirit; that thy servant may taste the fweetness, and approach this precious feast, with fuch reverence, and zeal, and fervent devotion, a thou will be pleafed to accept. O vifit me with the falvation, and awaken me from spiritual sloth and flumber; that I now may vigoroufly apply my felf to draw and drink the living water, contain'd in this fountain open for fin and for uncleanness. Enlight en the eyes of my mind, that I may fee the won drous things of this thy institution; and strengthe my faith, that I may firmly and without scrupl believe and expect those operations, which my rea fon is not able to account for. And why indee should I make any difficulty to believe, what I can not comprehend and trace the dark footsteps of when I remember, that it is not the act of finit feeble man, but the work of an almighty God; no an invention or project of human reason, but th institution and promise of him, who worketh a things according to the wife and wonderful count of his own unbounded will? To fathom the depths to the bottom were an attempt impracticable even to the refined understanding of an angel. We then may poor short-fighted man turn giddy at the fight of this abyss, and confess the well too deep, an thef the cordage and plummet too short. Such and I better is the condition of the most exalted faints

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and what can I, the feeblest even of men, vile finfil dust and ashes, hope to discover, by my most industrious search into those heavenly mysteries?

Instead therefore of nice reasoning and unprofiable disputes, I will approach with singleness of heart, with firm and holy hope, with an undoubting faith, and profound reverence. Whatever the unity of worldly wisdom may suggest to the contary, I will not question, but thou art present in the sacrament, though I cannot satisfy the captious aquiries after the particular manner of that prechief the particular formation and divine nature are inseparation be; thus much I know, and no more but this; that hou art so present as God, as not to contradict thy king man. 'Tis upon this account, that thou art her pleased to command my receiving thee, and hast en-uple aged to make me one with thyself, by the strictest rea mion of a holy love. Shed therefore, I pray thee, mion of a holy love. Shed therefore, I pray thee, by special grace into my heart, that I may dissolve this holy fire, and become entirely thine. Purge of this holy fire, and let me no more endure the allay fant fany baser mixtures. For this sacrament is the wrest, the noblest refiner of souls, the health of the whole man, the restorative of spiritual decays, he cure of vice, the curb of passions, the antidote sainst troubles and temptations; the conveyancer of the gainst troubles and temptations; the conveyance of the gainst troubles and temptations; the conveyance of the gainst troubles and temptations; the conveyance of the gainst troubles and temptations; the conveyance of the gainst troubl

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infirmity and fin, and restorer of my inward comfort and peace. By this thou fustainest them in sadness and affliction, and enablest them to walk upon the waves of a troublesome world. By this thou cheerest their melancholy and distrust, and raisest up their finking spirits with affurance of thy gracious protection and affistance. By this thou renewest their nature, and purifiest their affections; that they, who came at first to this table, with great lothness and dulness, feel a new warmth within, and by degrees are brought to frequent it with unspeakable relish and delight. These happy and glorious Effects thou producest, by such uncommon, unlikely means, that Men may find experimentally their own infirmities; how little they are able to do of themselves, and how much, when strengthened by thee. That they are cold, infenfible, stupid and dead to all religious duties, is from their own disposition; that they are zealous in good works, chearful in thy fervice, devout in thy worship, is purely thy gift. And sure none can come hither with due attention, but he must return with some improvement. For who can lie at the fountain-head, and not receive fome tincture from the sweetness of the spring? Who can stand close to the fire, and feel no hurt? But thou art a fountain ever full, ever overflowing. Thou art the fire, whose flames are constantly expanding themselves, to kindle holy affections in all those, who are careful to approach, and put themselves in the way of their activity and influence.

It may be I am not worthy to drink at the head of this spring, or to take my fill of its refreshing streams; but yet at least I will apply my mouth to some of its distant pipes, and spreading rills, to catch

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n to atch a few of the drops, as they flide by, that I be not utterly barren, nor die with drought and thirst. I may not be able to approach this flame fo near, that it should refine and brighten me to a degree equal with the purity of the cherubim and feraphim; but yet I will not despair of being so far cherished and warmed by it, that my zeal may be exalted according to the brightness of human virtues: And my enlivened heart shall feel some glowings, if it do not flame out heavenly clear. Defects and infirmities, I know, I cannot be exempted from: But what is wanting, I beg my merciful Jesus would supply. His kindness will not fail to make all equitable Allowances, and his Wisdom knows where they are proper to be made. Forgiven and made up they may be; and I, as unworthy as I am, may be accepted. But that unworthness must not be made a pretence for detaining me from this Sacrament. For fure the most unworthy are comprehended, and they who fee, and lament, that they are fuch, can least of all be excluded; when he pronounces that general invitation, Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

The oftner I descend into my self, the more I am convinced, that this description exactly suits my state. I fulfil the primitive sentence upon fallen man, and labour in the sweat of my face, Gen. iii. The forrows of my heart perplex and distract me, the burthens of my fins fink me down, the multitude of my temptations are a perpetual torment and vexation, the variety and exorbitance of my corrupt affections entangle and confound, and over-power my reason. And in the midst of these calamities and dangers, I have no fuccour, no defence, no

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supporter or deliverer, but only thee, my God, and therefore into thy hands, my merciful maker and faviour, I commit myself, and all my affairs; and pray that thou would'ft keep what is thus deposited with thee, fafe unto life eternal. O take me therefore into thy custody; and, as thou hast ordained thy body and blood to be the food of immortality; fo grant, that it may have its proper efficacy upon my foul in particular, to the glory of thy name, and the honour of fo bleffed an institution. And, that no neglect or unfruitfulness of mine may obstruct its kindly and powerful operations: Grant, I befeech thee, my God and Saviour, that I never may be guilty of fuch difrespect, as wilfully to turn my back upon thy table; but may earnestly long for, heartily rejoice in, and diligently comply with, every opportunity of receiving this inestimable blesfing; and may fo frequent, and fo improve under thy merciful dispensation; that I may constantly return, with greater care and zeal, more fettled refolutions, more irreconcileable hatred against fin, and more fervent love for God and goodness than before. So shall I approach nearer to thee indeed, and each facrament prove a fresh advance toward heaven. shall my foul be filled with the treasures of thy mercy, the delights of thy fecret ones, and the ravishing foretaftes of that blifs, which shall be always growing, till it be confummated at last in that eternal feast above, the marriage-supper of the lamb in thy kingdom. Amen.

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CHAP. V.

The dignity of the facrament, and honour of the priesthood.

CHRIST.

IF thou feest the table richly furnished, and art defirous to feast upon these dainty meats, let that defire be duly tempered with reverence and holy fear. For know, that if thou hadft the purity of an angel, or the mortified piety of John the baptist, vet even thou could'st not deserve so divine a bleffing. but ought'st to acknowledge it a mighty favour and condescension, that thou art admitted to receive, and tafte, or even to touch this bleffed facrament. That man should consecrate those elements, and by pronouncing a fet form of words introduce a new efficacy, and give them a mystical power, which nature neither did, nor could provide them with before; that the persons present should eat the bread of angels, and be filled with heavenly food, by vertue of fuch confecration; these are not the effect of any extraordinary merit, in them who fanctify, or who receive, those creatures of bread and wine, but the pure and fole effect of mercy and grace. The greatness of the mystery does indeed magnify the priestly office; and men ought to pay a more than common respect to those persons, whom God hath honoured with a privilege, not imparted to the very angels themselves. For they, who are regularly ordained in the church, are the only persons, by whose ministry God gives the body of his fon to us. are the persons acting by his commission, they use the form appointed by Christ himself, and have a constant

constant and powerful effect attending upon their due administration. But still our thoughts and wonder must not terminate in them, as if by their own power and holiness they could bring such things to pass. For they are only instruments; and therefore we must carry our meditations further, up as high as God himself, for he is the first and principal cause, he the invisible worker of this miracle of mercy. It is his word, which made, and governs all things; that only can command material and common elements to produce spiritual and extraordinary effects, and strengthen and refresh the souls of the faithful by the body and blood of Christ; at the fame time, and with as certain operation, as their bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine.

When therefore thou approachest the christian altar, rest not in the testimony of thy senses, nor dwell upon the outward and visible figns; but let thy faith carry thee on to the inward and spiritual grace, and exercise it self in contemplating the almighty power of God. And thou, to whom the invoking this power and its efficacious prefence is committed, fee that thou do it with awful reverence and godly Fear: Confider whose servant thou art, and what a glorious character thou haft received by imposition of the bishop's hands. For thou art ordained a priest for noble and religious purposes. The excellence of thy office confifts, in giving thy mafter's family their portion of meat, in due manner and Be faithful therefore in the execution of this weighty trust; proceed in it with a fervent and exemplary devotion, and let it be thy first care, to offer up thy felf, an unreprovable facrifice to God.

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Do not imagine any part of thy privilege to confift in an exemption from the duties incumbent upon common christians. Alas! thy burden is not less but greater, thy temptations many; thy danger more eminent, for being thus distinguished. For it will be expected, that the fanctity of thy manners, the feverity of thy virtue, the conquest of thy passions, the perfection of thy holiness, the ardency and zeal of thy devotion, should distinguish thee, as visibly, as eminently, as thy garb and thy profession do. thou should'st be cloath'd and adorn'd with that righteousness, that innocence, that gravity, of which thy robe is a fignificant embelm; and as thou art become a leader, thou should'st likewise be a pattern, to the flock. For the conversation of such persons hould be no longer conformable to the customs and corrupt examples of the world, but conformed to the angels in heaven, or to the faints that excel in virtue upon earth.

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When thou entrest into the holy place, and there puttest on the garments of thy function, consider what thou art going about, and how high a place thou hast obtained; no less than to be the representative of the great high-priest in heaven, and to minister in his stead unto his people. First, therefore, with all humility, bewail thy unworthiness, and confess thy own sins. Then with a most extensive charity, and tender compassion, bewail, and intercede for the sins of others. Look upon thy self as a mediator between God and transgressors; to offer up their prayers, confessions and thanksgivings to him; and to transmit his pardon and blessing to them. And he not sloathful or unthinking, careless or cold in this affair; for it is most important, and requires thy

most diligent attention, thy most earnest importunity, thy most indefatigable perseverance; never to be abated, till thou buth gained thy point, and prevailed for mercy and grace, by those resolute wrestlings with God. But, when thou celebratest the holy supper, remember, thou art about a work, which all heaven and earth are concern'd in. A work, which, when perform'd as it ought, brings honour to God, joy to the blessed angels, edification to the church of Christ, conversation to sinners, peace to wounded consciences, comfort to the afflicted, strength to the feeble, and to thy self abundance of grace, and an exceeding great reward.

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CHAP. VI.

An act of preparation before the sacrament.

DISCIPLE.

Ehold, Lord, with thy accustomed mercy, the doubts and confusions of my troubled breast For, when I look up to heaven, and confider the majesty of my great, my holy God; and from thence draw my eyes back upon my felf, and view my own vileness and horrible sinfulness; I am all perplexity and diffraction and horror. Thou biddest me come and if I refuse or neglect to comply with that gracious invitation, I forfake my own mercy, and de prive my felf of life and happiness. But if I com unworthily, I am equally miferable; and shall be punished for the high indignity, of bringing so pol luted a guest, to so pure and heavenly a feast. Wha course then shall I take to be safe, when danger an death threaten on either hand? I will even fly t thee my God; and, instead of consulting with flesh an

and blood, or hearkning to the deceitful Infinuations of my too rash or too timorous reason, will ask council of thee, my infallible and only oracle in distresses.

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Teachme, I befeech thee, the right way, and lead me in fuch methods of holy preparation, as may be proper and fuitable to fo exalted an act of religion. I know that these approaches to thee, in the blessed facrament, are exceeding beneficial and delightful; but withal reveal to me in what manner thou must be approached, to render that, which is defirable in it self, safe and profitable to me in particular. Give me, I befeech thee, a due sense of the greatness of the mystery, and the excellence of thy mercy in it; and, confequent to that, fill my foul with pure and holy affections, with earnest longings, with godly forrow, with fincere and stedfast resolutions, with profound reverence and fincere devotion; that my heart may be a clean, though homely receptacle for my faviour, fuch as he will not disdain; and I so well-disposed a guest at this divine feast, this spiritual facrifice, that thou may'ft bid me welcome to thy table, and the food I receive there may nourish me up to health and life eternal. Amen.

CHAP. VII.

Of self-examination.

CHRIST.

A Bove all keepings, keep thy heart; and, whether priest or private christian, take good heed, that, at thy coming to my holy table, thy devotion consist not in bodily worship, and pomp and shew only. I am not to be imposed upon with such empty formalities, but require an upright, humble, and

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devout mind; a mind low and proftrate as thy body, a stedfast faith and pure intention, an unfeigned Zeal for God's honour. Therefore, before thou prefumest to approach, examine well, how thou art qualified. Search every corner of thy conscience, and do thy utmost to purge and expel all remains of the old leaven. Let no fin unrepented of reproach thee; no lust unmortified divide thy affections, and hinder thy free and entire refignation to my will. Conceive a just hatred and indignation against all thy fins in general; and for those, which are either too gross to be overlooked, or too habitual to be forgotten, express a particular and proportionable resentment of Sorrow and shame. And, if thou have time and leifure, look well into the irregularities of all thy paffions, and, in thy private retirements, make a full Confession of them, between God and thy own soul.

Recollect and bewail the unhappy prevalence of worldy and carnal affections; every exorbitant Defire, every ungoverned passion. Observe, how the motions of evil concupifcence abound and domineer; how unguarded thou art in thy outward behaviour, and the general course of thy conversation; how eafily thou art feduced by vanity; how vehemently disposed to the gratifications of appetite and sense; how careless and stupid in the weightier concerns of thy foul; how apt to let thyfelf loose to laughter and extravagant mirth, and how exceedingly unwilling to mourn for thy fins with a true, faving, and necessary contrition; how earnestly thou pursuest the pleasures and advantages of the body, and how dull and flothful thou art in the exercises of mortification and godly zeal; how mighty curious and inquisitive after news and trifles, and greedy to be entertained

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entertained with every pomp and beauty that can please thy fight; but how negligent and backward. how full of difregard and disdain, to things of less gay appearance, but of true inward worth, and efficacious consequence to thy better state; how greedy of gain; how sparing in thy alms; how tenacious of this world's goods; how inconfiderate in thy discourse, how childish and trifling, how wicked or obscene; how lavish and profuse; and what a torment it is to fet a guard before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips, Pfal. cxli. How affected or extravagant in thy behaviour, how rash and eager in thy actions, how inordinate in thy appetites; but how flow and deaf to the word of God; how negligent in hearing, and how inflexible to be perfuaded by what thou hast heard; how prone to rest and ease, and how averse to labour and necessary care: how wakeful and attentive at plays, or balls, and how drowfy and lifeless in prayer and holy duties; how impatient till they are done; and how full of wandering and impertinent thoughts, while they are in doing; how easily diverted from thy stated hours of devotion; how lukewarm in receiving the bleffed facrament, how unfixed in thy mind at the very time of communicating, and how barren and unprofitable afterwards; how foon excited to anger upon every flight miscarriage, and yet how apt to give offence to others; how prone to judge, and feverely censure thy brethren; how stiff and positive in those judgments and hard constructions; how insolent and immoderately exalted with good fortune, and how feeble and dejected under every cross or disappointment; how full of good intentions, and how few of them executed to thy eternal advantage, as they ought to be.

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These, and many other desects, of which each man's own conscience can best inform him, it is thy duty to inquire into very impartially; to bewail seriously, to consess with the prosoundest humility, and with firm purpose of amendment for the time to come. When this is done, then, without any secret reserve to thy own inclinations, resign thyself up entirely to God, to be governed by him, and offer to the glory of his name, thy soul and body, a holy, living and reasonable sacrifice. Thus shalt thou come to me worthily, and receive my mystical

body to thy infinite advantage.

For there is no other fatisfaction in man's power to make for his great offences, and manifold provocations against the majesty on high; no oblation more acceptable than that of a broken and contrite, a pure and upright heart, offered to God in this facrament. He defires nothing but thy felf, and he defires this, not for his own, but for thy fake. He who brings it, let him not doubt acceptance; for God never rejects a true penitent, but embraces returning prodigals, with the tenderness of a father; and grants them pardon for the time past, and grace for the future. His word, his oath is passed. And he who cannot lie may fecurely be depended upon. As I live, faith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a finner, but rather that he should be converted and live, Ezek. xviii. And at what time foever the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; Repent therefore, and turn your selves from all your transgressions, and so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

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I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and iniquities will I remember no more, Heb. viii.

CHAP. VIII.

Christ died for us, that we should live to him.

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Behold and take example by me. I hung upon the cross with a naked body, and stretch'dout arms, and thus offered myself to my father for thy sin. No part of me remained, which was not given in atonement, to appease the wrath of thy justly incensed judge. And thou in like manner must think it thy duty, freely and wholly to give up thy self, a clean and holy sacrifice. Every power, every affection, of thy soul must be for ever consecrated to me, in the blessed facrament. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to consult thy own interest, and save thyself, by conveying over thyself to me? Whatever else thou dedicatest to my service, is of no value, no consideration with me; for I seek not thine, but thee.

As all the world besides would fail of procuring thy happiness and satisfaction if deprived of me; so all thy riches and gifts set apart for my use, can never be well-pleasing in my sight, unless with them thou givest thy own self. My whole person was sacrificed for thy redemption; either of my natures single had been insufficient to propitiate for thy sins; my whole body and blood is set upon my table for thy entertainment; and what can be the meaning of all this, but that I should be entirely thine, and thou entirely mine? But if thou art not sincere in this oblation, if it be made with any reserves and exceptions;

tions; the offering is not perfect, the facrifice is maimed, defective in its parts; and the union, which should follow upon it, must be proportionably lame and imperfect. The first thing therefore to be taken care of, is the liberal and full refignation of thy person. This must recommend and fanctify all thy other acts of religion; and, till thou art released from the bondage of divided affections, thou canst not attain grace and true liberty. Hence it is, and upon no other account, that, of so many professors, and feemingly good christians, so very few stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free. The condition is fixed and irreverfible, If a man for sake not all that be bath, be cannot be my disciple, Luke xiv. And therefore, if thou defirest to be found in this happy number, enter my courts with a free-will offering, and consecrate every inclination, every faculty of thy foul. Have no love, no desires, but mine. Submit thy self wholly to my holy will and pleasure, and study to serve me truly in boline's and righteousness all thy days, in all the actions, of thy life.

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CHAP. IX.

An act of self-resignation.

DISCIPLE.

I is very meet, right, and my bounden duty, that I should at all times do as thou requirest: For this, O Lord, is but to give thee of thy own. Heaven and earth are thine, and all that therein is. I defire with singleness of heart, to dedicate my self to thee, never to retract the gift, but continue thine for ever. Accept me therefore entirely devoted to thy fervice

fervice from this day forward, a facrifice of praise and perpetual thanksgiving. I call those blessed spirits to witness, who, tho' invisible to human eyes, constantly assist at our solemn acts of religious worship: Humbly beseeching thee, that the oblation of thy dear son's blessed body, represented in this sacrament, may be effectual for the salvation of me, and

of all thy faithful people.

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I offer to thee, Lord, my manifold fins and transgressions, my corrupt inclinations and vicious habits, which from my youth up until now, have fo griewoully provoked thy wrath and just indignation, to be a whole burnt-facrifice. Slay them O Lord, before thy altar, and confume them in the fire of thy love that not any the least spot of guilt may remain behind. Purify my conscience from their stain, and wipe out their very remembrance. Restore to me thy grace, which my fins and wilful neglects have lo often forfeited. Give me the comfort of thy help again, and establish me with thy free, thy renewing firit, Psal. li. and, having sealed a full pardon for what is past, receive me to thy fatherly embraces, and affure me of thy affection, by a kiss of peace and reconciliation.

What satisfaction can I make for my manifold injuries and bold affronts to thy righteous laws, but that alone of humble confession, prosound sorrow, and hearty prayers, for thy acceptance of thy son's atonement? I do most heartily bewail and detest all my wickednesses, and by thy grace will never be guilty of the like any more. I do, and will to the last minute of my life grieve for these provocations; and am desirous, by my future carriage, to testify the truth of my repentance, and make the best reparation

ration I am able, for the scandal I have formerly O Lord, pardon me; O Lord, forgive me; defer not for thy own fake, O my God; but let the mercy be glorified in preferving the foul of thy fervant, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood. Behold I commit my felf wholly to thy mercy, and commend and deposite my spirit into thy hands. O deal with me according to thy great goodness, and not after my fins and heirous offences

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To thee I humbly offer all in me that is goon. A very poor worthless and imperfect offering, I with shame confess it: but worthless as it is, I beg thou wilt accept it. Supply my defects, fanctify and ex alt what is debased with infirmity or impure mix tures; disdain not my fincere, tho' weak, endea yours; enable me daily to do better; and raise a last this slothful, unprofitable creature, to such de grees of virtue and fuccesful activity, as may, by th more diligent use of thy grace, end in a blefs'd an glorious eternity.

I also dedicate to thee the prayers and good wisher of all that have interceded for me, or defired my in tercessions for them: The necessities and distress for my friends and relations, and all that have don good to me, or others, for thy fake; imploring, that thou would'st assist them by thy grace, comfort the in their afflictions, protect them in all dangers, del ver them from punishment and death eternal; an fo rescue them from evil, that they may magnify th good providence, and with thankful hearts rejoic

in thy mercy.

In a more particular manner, accept, I befeed thee, my most hearty prayers, and peace offering preas for all, who have injured me in word, thought sidon de

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deed, created me any disturbance by ill treatment, sander'd or reviled me with ill language, or given me any manner of uneafiness, or angry resentment. And likewise, for all, whom I have injured, grieved, or offended, by word, thought or deed, knowingly or ignorantly, with, or without defign: Intreating thy forgiveness for all that hath been done, or taken amiss on either side, Take away, thou who lovedst and diedst for thy enemies, all rancour and malice, all animofities and revengeful thoughts. all paffionate remembrances and dispositions to strife and debate, all that may be inconfistent with true charity, or tend to the decay of brotherly love. Have mercy, Lord, on all, who fue for mercy; apply the needs of all that want; and grant us all uch measures of thy grace, and so firm perseverance nit; that we may grow up to fuch degrees, as this mortal state is capable of here, and may receive our perfect confummation and blifs, both in body and bul, in thy eternal and everlasting kingdom. Amen.

CHAP. X.

The sin and mischief of absenting from the Lord's-supper.

CHRIST.

delleg T is by no means sufficient, that men do once, and or very rarely, repair to this holy facrament; y the out, as their occasions and necessities are frequent, spoid is should their care in seeking supplies be. The assistance of the foul are daily in commotion, and its seed seeks and evil habits get ground by their malignant ring preading quality. The temptations of the devil are the dom intermitted; or, if they be, 'tis only out of U u 2

wicked fubtilty, that even those intervals of quiet may contribute the more effectually to mens ruin. And if this be, as most affuredly it is, thy case, think then, how urgent thy wants are, and how frequent thy returns ought to be to this fountain of divine grace. That here thou may'ft drink living water, and quench the raging maladies of thy foul; that here thou may'ft receive balm into thy wounds, and apply proper remedies to thy feveral indispositions; that thou may'ft grow more wife and wary by fuch recollections, more clearly understand thy own state, by those examinations, which prepare thee for my table; and by frequently and devoutly attending this holy institution, be strengthned against the affaults of the enemy, and more upon thy guard against his subtle infinuations. And one of his infinuations it certainly is, to hinder and draw men off from communicating often; as being very fenfible how great and happy advantages they reap by fo doing; and, that this is the very best course they can possibly take of securing themselves, and defeating his malicious endeavours to debauch and ruin their fouls.

For this reason men are not to think it strange, if they find the devil then more especially busy, when they set themselves, with more than common earnessness, to the preparation for, or the exercise of, the most solemn and exalted acts of religion. For this wicked spirit, as the history of Job intimates, is always industrious to mingle himself with the sons of God, when they appear before their heavenly sather, Job i. He contrives then to give them great disturbance, to damp their joys, and break their holy purposes, by suggesting many fears, and distracting

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difting tracting their minds with unnecessary scruples. He terrifies them with eating and drinking their own damnation, and keeps them back by mistaken notions of their unworthiness and danger. If he can either thus prevail, for a total neglect of this facrament, or contrive, that they shall come full of doubt, and diffatisfaction, he gains his point. But he not ignorant of his devices; inform thy felf rightly of thy duty, and wherein unworthiness does truly confift; that nothing but want of fincerity and true reverence, can bring thee into hazard; and then despise his vain attempts to discompose and frustrate thy good intentions. Retort his wicked craft back upon his own head, by being more vigilant, more careful, more resolved; but by no means omit this duty, nor fuffer thy felf to be drawn off from that communion, which is the fovereign antidote, and the best preservative, against fin and temptation.

If he labours to difguise his devilish arts, under the spacious colour of caution, and humility, and want of more perfect devotion; lay afide thy unprofitable and disquieting anxieties, and flee for succour and advice to some godly pastor. Let his prudence direct thy doubting steps, and unbosom thy felf freely to him; that, by confessing thy fins, and opening thy case to the physician of souls, thou may'ft receive the benefit of ghostly counsel, and the comfort of absolution. Know, that no fin can hurt thee, or render thee an unworthy receiver, when once confess'd, and seriously repented of: And that, when this is done, all thy doubts and perplexities but hinder the grave of God, and check thy improvement in piety and true devotion. Let not

any ordinary trouble or affliction deter thee from coming to thy Lord for relief; but make the greater haste to reconcile thy self to God, and purge away those offences, which may have provoked, and drawn down, the affliction upon thee. Let not any difference between thee and thy brethren detain thee; for there is a short and ready way of removing this obstacle, by forgiving and praying for those who have grieved or injured thee; and by reconciling thy felf, and asking pardon of those, whom thou haft offended. And, if they still be so perverse, as not to be reconciled upon a due submission; yet confider, their obstinacy and wickedness ought not to be an obstruction to the performance of thy duty. Thou hast done thy part, and God will be fure to forgive, and accept thy person, though men do not.

What benefit can a man poffibly propose to himfelf from the putting off examination and repentance, and forbearing to come to the holy communion? Most certainly, when one is diseased, the greatest wisdom is to be restored to health again as soon as possibly he can; to expel the malignity, and difcharge the venom immediately. Thus will the cure be easier, more speedy, more successful. For every delay adds to the distemper, and gathers fresh and more obstinate matter. If you omit the present opportunity upon one pretence, another and more prevailing may interpose, and deprive you of the next. And thus by degrees you will be wrought upon to excuse yourself again and again, and by longer abstinence become less fit, as well as less willing, to return to your duty. Whatever burthen then you find upon your mind, get quit of it betimes; do not indulge your floth and backwardness a moment;

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for there never can come any good of prolonging your cares and troubles, and making the common hindrances of worldly bufiness, a reason for neglecting your great, your eternal interest. This is most manifest, and experience will prove the truth of it when it is too late; that, the longer you defer communicating, the less you will find your felf disposed to it; and a strange carelesness and disregard for holy exercises will insensibly creep upon your mind, and get a prevailing mastery. But, which is a most lamentable thing to confider, many loofe and diffolute, nay, many thoughtless and lukewarm people, indulge themselves in this indifference; and industrioully feek pretences to defer their repentance and approaches to the Lord's table, meerly to avoid, as they think, the necessity of parting with their darling lusts, and the keeping that strict guard upon their conversation, without which they must be lost to all eternity.

How cold, alas! is those mens love for me? How feeble their devotion, who, upon such frivolous pretences, can dispence with this so necessary duty, so glorious privilege, of communicating at thy table? How happy how easy to himself, how acceptable, how dear to God, is that man, whose conduct is so strictly virtuous, whose conscience is so void of stain and reproach, that he could every day most chearfully, most safely, partake of this heavenly feast, were the opportunities of doing it equal to his disposition, and could his zeal escape the censure of needless ostentation? For a man is not presently to be condemned, who does not seek, or embrace, every possible occasion of communicating. There may be some very allowable, and others even commendable,

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teasons, for absenting. If out of deep humility, and awful reverence, or as a voluntary punishment inflicted upon a man's felf for some grievous relapse, he imposes this penance, or dreads to come: The respect paid to the ordinance, or the holy indignation conceived against himself, may be better accepted. and more becoming than receiving it in fuch circumstances. But this must be so far indulged, that long difuse should produce indifference and difregard for the facrament. For, if once the foul degenerate into neglect and spiritual sloth, all possible endeavours must be used to awaken it. Not doubting, but that God will be ever present with the assistance of his grace, and fecond thy care with fuccess, proportionable to thy endeavours and diligence, and the fin-

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But one thing must always be observ'd, that when the hindrances to communicating are real, and important, and necessary; not frivolous excuses industriously sought, or readily laid hold on, to cover impiety and negligence; the person so detain'd is prefent in wish and inclination, though not in actual attendance. And then the benefit of the facrament, and all the faving effects of it, are as fully imparted to him, as his appearance in the congregation, and the elements themselves could have insured them. For 'tis a great mistake to imagine, that good men receive not the advantages of Christ's body and blood, except just then, when they receive the outward and visible signs of them. Every day, every hour furnishes opportunities of spiritual communion; and a man thus composed can never be surprized, never find any difficulty to comply with any occasion of live doing it publickly. For an innocent life, and a devout

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vout mind, are a constant preparation. But when, the usual seasons return, and especially the solemn festivals, wherein the great and glorious mysteries of the christian Religon are commemorated; then such a one will think it his duty to join with the publick affemblies, in this fublimest instance of Piety and Thanksgiving; he will approach with a heart full of affection and reverence; and efteem this homage due, not only to himself for the comforts and advantages he may expect from it, but more especially to me, for the honour and tribute of praise, by which my name and mercies ought to be thus magnified among men. And this is a fruit, which can only redound to me by open and visible acts of worship. Whereas the other of private improvement and mystical communion with Christ, is attained in secret, and constanty follows upon every religious meditation concerning my incarnation, and fufferings, or any other of the mysterious works, by which the redemption of mankind was compleated, and the pious Affections of christians are cherished and inflamed.

They, who referve themselves for the feasts of the Church only, totally neglecting other opportunities, and take no care to put their fouls in a due posture for receiving, except only when fuch folemnities call them to it, are seldom or never prepared as they ought to be. He is the fafe, the happy man, who makes it his frequent practice, and constantly offers up himself a sacrifice to his God. In the act of comfur- municating keep rule and order, and let not thy d a laste or impatience, the length of thy private deof twe disturbance to the common usages and ceredenonies of the congregation, whereof thou art a

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member. For take this along with thee, that, even in this part of worship, where zeal and devotion are most acceptable ingredients, yet these very qualifications, when indulged out of season and measure, lose all their value; and are not half so pleasing in the sight of God, as unaffected modesty, and an humble decent compliance with the establish'd orders and customs of the church, and the convenience of others; who ought not to be disturbed, or incommoded, for the fantastical or peculiar ways of any private perfon whatsoever.

CHAP. XI.

The benefit of Christ's body and blood.

DISCIPLE.

Sweetest, dearest Jesus! Who can express the charms, and extafies, of that foul, which feafts with thee at thy table; that table, where no common food is placed, but the divine entertainment of thy own body and blood? An entertainment delicious, above all that man can express or imagine! What fatisfaction should we take to come into thy tabernacle, and fall low on our knees before thy footftool, to open wide our hearts for the delights of thy house, and, with Mary Magdalen, to wash thy holy feet with tears of love? But where, alas! Is thy devotion to be found? Where are those eyes overflowing with pious forrow? Or, if that forrow be fwallowed up in joy, yet ought we not even thus to approach thee with dry eyes, but tears of joy should trickle down apace, when we confider our mighty privilege, and the happiness of being admitted to thy blessed presence, and made partakers of the bliss of angels. For, de

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as they really behold thy face in glory, fo am I fure to fee, and to receive thee, in the mystick elements; tho' covered there under a different form, and shrouded in a veil of bread and wine.

I adore thy goodness, which thus condescends to the infirmities of human nature, and in abundant compassion is pleased, under these sensible representations, to hide that glorious majesty, whose native lustre is too piercing and bright, for me, or any created being, to behold in its full lustre. But tho' my eyes fee thee not as thou art; yet here, I know I enjoy most effectually: And do therefore most humbly adore that divinity on earth, which angels proftrate themselves before in heaven. I do it through a glass, and I gaze with the eyes of faith; they are permitted to do it face to face, and to know even as they are known. I Cor. xiii. And tho' this glass be dark and dim, yet it is fuch as I ought to be content with, fince mortality admits of nothing better; nor can I attain any higher perfection, till the day of everlasting life dawn, and the thick shadows of figures are scattered by its brightness. When that which is perfect shall come, then will all use for facraments be superseded, and for ever cease. For these are remedies and expedients, accommodated to astate of frailty and impersection, such as the blesled above have no occasion for. They are in endless beams of thy glorious presence. They see thee as thou art, and are transformed into the execellencies they see. I John iii. They taste the word made flesh, not in the symbols of his human nature, but in the native charms of his divine essence; as he was the word of God from all eternity, and shall continue to be for ever.

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When these ideas, so full of wonder, employ my thoughts, I not only feel a generous disdain of worldly comforts, but am provoked to difesteem even those spiritual and better consolations, which thy grace at present diffuses through my foul. And all besides seem poor and despicable, so long as I am debarred the fight of my love and my Lord. Thou knowest the secrets of my heart, and wilt bear testimony to the fincerity of those professions I make: when I declare, that nothing less than God, whom I most earnestly long for ever to contemplate, can fatisfy and fill the impatient defires of my enlarged foul. But this, I know, is a bleffing, not to be obtained by mortal man, and therefore I will with patience wait the time appointed for it. Thus did thy faints of old, who now partake of the joys and kingdom of their Lord. Their faith was vigorous, and their perseverance unshaken, their thirstings eager, but their patience exemplary and humble; till that coming of their Lord, which they thought long; at last released, and exalted them. My hope, my faith, are now the fame, which theirs were then; and, I trust, my joy and crown, shall by thy grace and mercy, be one day the same too. Till thy day come, I will tread in their steps and support my self by the contemplation of their illustrious examples. Thy holy feriptures shall be my comfort: In them, as in a glafs, I will view and adorn my foul: And above all, thy bleffed body and blood shall be my Siritual sustenance. Here will I seek for strength against infirmities, here apply balm to my wounds and phyfick to my dif ales, and hither fly for refuge in all my fears, and dangers, and temptations.

Two things are plainly necessary to the preservati-

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on of life, without which no mifery could be fo infupportable, as that of living here. The difmal confinement of this prison of flesh can only be endured by the help of food and light. Thy mercy hath not lest us destitute of these provisions; but kindly given thy holy body for my refreshment and sustenance, and thy holy word a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths. Pfal. cxix. To these I owe, not my comfort only, but even my life it felf. For the word of god is the light of the foul, and the facrament of his death is the bread of life. These are the two tables of the christian, resembling those of the jewish church heretofore; where the divine treafures are exhibited and preferved. The one, like that of the shew-bread, furnished most richly with the fymbols of thy precious body; Heb. 1x. The other, like the repolitory of the law, containing holy doctrines, prescribing true and saving faith, and leading us within the veil to the most holy place.

All honour, and praise, and thanksgiving, be to the bleffed Jesus, light of eternal uncreated light, for the table of his heavenly doctrine, spread and adorned by the ministry of his inspired servants, the prophets, aposles, and other holy writers, taught by himself, that they might teach us. All glory and thanks be to the great creator and merciful redeemer of mankind, for his extensive tender love, in preparing a plenteous feast for all the world. Not like that Paschal lamb of old, a Type and shadow only, but the very substance of that shadow, the acomplishment of that type; even Christ our passover sacrificed for us, and offered to us. This bread fustains, this cup chears and rejoices the hearts of the faithful. It fills them with the overflowing delights of paradife,

dife, is a Pledge and foretaste of heaven, and allowing for the difference of condition, admits us into partnership with angels themselves. The joy of both is the same, tho' both cannot receive it in equal pro-

portions.

How high and honourable is that function, to which God hath permitted, nay enjoined, to minifter in these holy things; to handle and deliver this bleffed bread, and give each fervant his portion of life by and with it, to implore with wonderful efficacy the divine bleffing, and exalt natural and common things, to purposes and effects infinitely exceeding all the powers of nature? How clean should those hands, how pure those lips, how chast and holy that body be, which so frequently, so familiarly converse with, and are united to, the author and perfection of all purity? Sure nothing of corrupt communication, nothing indecent, nothing idle or trifling, nothing but what may tend to edifying, ought to come out of that mouth, which fo often bleffes, and confecrates, and takes into it, the facrament of his dying redeemer. How should those eyes be turned away from vanity, how immovably fixed upon heavenly objects, which fee their Lord's mystical body, and invite his peculiar presence, so frequently brought upon the altar, by virtue of their being lifted up to the throne of grace, in benedictions and prayers of his own inftituting?

To men of this profession under the law, no doubt that precept was in a more peculiar manner intended, Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy, Levit. xix. But sure the fanctity and exemplary lives of priess under the gospel ought to be as much more excellent than those of the sons of Aaron, as

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Of the Imitation of JESUS CHRIST. 349 our ministration exceeds theirs in glory. And therefore, grant thy grace, O bleffed God, to all who are admitted to this holy office! And thou, who alone workest great marvels, exert thy almighty power, in enabling every fuch person to serve at thine altar, with clean hands, and a pure heart, with a becoming zeal, and moving devotion; fuch as may not only fuit their own character, but be a pattern and powerful incitement to the piety of o-And if we cannot, (as indeed we are still but men, and in many things offend all) if we cannot stand before thee in pure unblemished innocence. or come not up to all those eminent degrees of perfection, which we might and ought: Yet let at least our deep and godly forrow, by the efficacy of thy merits, expiate our offences; and our refolu-

tions of entire reformation, and more conspicuous piety and devotion for the time to come, our unfeigned humility and charity unconfined, and labours indefatigable, make fuch reparation, as thou wilt please to accept, for the miscarriages occasioned by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by our own

CHAP. XII.

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Of preparation to the communion.

CHRIST.

I Love holiness, and I give what I love. A pure heart is the thing I delight in, and this is the place of my rest. Furnish me thy largest room. and I will come and eat the Passover at thy house with my disciples, Luke xxii. Purge out the old leaven, and adorn with piety every corner of thy heart:

heart; fweep it clean from the world, and all its filth of thy fins; if thou defirest that I should come and make my abode with thee. Sit as a sparrow alone upon the house-top, and mourn in thy closet for all the transgressions wherein thou hast exceeded; so will I be with thee, and comfort thee, in the bitterness of thy soul. Thy careful preparation will be the natural consequence of thy sincerity and respect for me. For every lover provides his best appartment to entertain his friend, and best beloved; and, by his diligence to receive so desired a guest, expresses the truth as well as the greatness of his affection.

But know withal, when thou haft done thy utmost, that even whole years, bestowed in preparation, cannot effect what in flict justice is due to me. That thou art admitted to my table, and received kindly there, is owing, after all, not to thy own defert, but to my grace and mercy, which accepts thy weak endeavours, and passes by thy sin and unworthinefs. If beggars, with their nakedness and fores, have leave to fit and feast with princes; their duty is, with humility and thankfulness, to acknowledge the uncommon favour. Do then thy part, and do it in the best manner thou canst; do it diligently and heartily; come not as by compulfion, but come willingly and gladly; come not for f.fhion's fake, but come with reverence, and godly fear, and fervent zeal. When thy Saviour condescends to come to thee, refuse him not, nor turn thy back and absent from his table. I have invited, I have commanded thee to come; let not thy infirmities discourage thee, for they are all perfeetly known to me; and I will confider and allow

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When thou feelest thy heart burn with love and devotion, return thy thanks to God for kindling these holy fires. I did it, not because thou art worthy of fuch grace, but because I had compassion on thy weakness and thy wants. When thou findest thy felf cold and infenfible in religious duties, double thy diligence and thy prayers, lament thy deadness, and continue knocking, Matth. vii. and xv. For if thou persevere, and wilt take no denial, thou shalt not ask in vain, but be fed, at least with the crumbs that fall from thy master's table. Thou standest in need of me, but I have none of thee. It is for thy benefit, not my own, that I vouchfafe to meet thee at this facrament. Thou comest hither to be filled, and strengthened, and fanctified, to return better than thou camest, to receive increase of grace, to be one with me, and dwell in me; and those, who come fincerely disposed to receive me, and amend their life, I will in no wife fend empty away. Do not then neglect those gracious opportunities; do not absent, or come carelesly; but make me room in thy heart, and let it be a clean and fit reception for fo pure a guest, and he whom thou lovest, will go home with thee to thy house and abide there.

But then observe, that there is the same necessity of care and watch after this facrament, as of prayer and preparation before it. For a constant virtuous life, and strict guard over a man's felf, are best and most effectual preparation to every facrament, and the furest means of obtaining more and greater degrees of grace. A man, who prefently returns to

the world, and gives himself a loose to the liberties and affections, the business and the pleasures of it, undoes what he hath taken pains to do before; and defeats the good effects of his most solemn preparation. Be not fond of variety of company and diverfions; nor lavish and unwary in thy discourse; but rather chuse to retire into thy chamber, and converse much with God in solitude and silence. When thou hast him, thou hast a treasure which nothing can deprive thee of. I am worthy of thee all, and I expect thee all. Divide not thy felf between me and the world, but let me be thy love, thy joy, thy defire. So shall thy life be bid with Christ in God, Colof. iii. And, tho' thou can'ft not live in thy felf, yet thou shalt live in me; full of tranquility and peace, far above the ditorderly paffions, and corroding cares, of fenfual and earthly-minded men.

CHAP. XIII.

The fouls desire of union with Christ.

DISCIPLE.

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Hear thy gracious words, my dearest Lord, and readily and ardently believe the inexpressible happiness of them, whose souls thy heavenly presence sills. But how, O! how shall I attain that bliss? How shall I seek and find my God alone? How open my heart to entertain thee, so as to exclude all other guests from intruding? O! that no man, no creature, might from henceforth find place in my affections and desires, so as to interrupt my conversation with thee! When shall I break loose from company and care, and enjoy and talk with thee alone, in language free and kind, as that of dearest friends;

friends; and foft and tender, fweet and moving, as the unreserved retirements and endearing whispers of the most passionate lovers? This is my earnest wish, this my constant prayer, that my heart may be knit entirely to thee; and weaned from every earthly and fenfual delight, and invariably induced to tafte heavenly and eternal joys, by frequent returns to thy holy communion. Ah when, my god, shall I be wholly thine, regardless of my self, swallowed up quite in a blissful indisfoluble union with christ? Thou Lord in me, and I in thee; John xvii. and

thus may we continue united for ever!

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Thou verily art my beloved, my chosen, the chiefest among ten thousand, the friend of my bosom, with whom I defire to dwell all the days of my life. Thou art my peace, and only comfort; with out thee I find nothing but labour and forrow, vexation, and Torment, and misery insupportable. Thou art a God, that bidest thy self; not dealing thy bleffings promiscuously, but with wife and just distinction, satisfying the humble and meek with the pleasures of thy word, while thou concealest thy councel from the wicked, and leavest them to groan and howl, in the anguish and horror of their guilty souls! O how great is thy bounty! how fweet thy mercy! who refreshest thy hungry servants with the delicious bread, which came down from heaven; that thy faithful may eat thereof and not die. John vi. Surely there is no nation under heaven, which hath God fo near to them, as the Lord our God is unto us, in all that we call upon him for, Deut. iv. For he bealeth the broken in heart, he hath respect unto the lowly; he lifteth the simple out of the dust, and raiseth the needy from the dungbil, to set them with princes, Pfalm Y y 2

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cxlvii, cxxxviii, cxiii. to equal them with angels; nay, to give them his flesh for the satisfying their hunger, and, when they are thirsty, the wine of his blood to drink,

What fociety of men can boast of privileges, worthy to be named with those of the christian church? What creature is there upon earth, whose excellence and happiness is comparable to that of the pious and devout foul, where god takes up his refidence, and fustains the heart that entertains him, with his own glorious body? O grace unspeakable! O condescension most adorable! O love unmeasurable! Lord what is man, that thou should'st thus visit him? Or what can he render unto his God for these inestimable benefits? Alas! I have no return to make, but a poor worthless heart. And this is yet a farther instance of thy goodness, that thou expectest no other testimony of gratitude, but my self, and my fincere affection. Thus has thou made our duty our greatest happiness: For then shall my soul be glad, and all that is within me exult with joy, when my heart is perfectly united to my god. Then shall thou fay, if thou wilt be mine, I will live and dwell with thee for ever: And I with joy and humility reply, disdain not Lord, this mean and homely dwelling, for I most willingly, most thankfully embrace the offer. Lo I am thine intirely from this moment, and, above all things, wish, and pray, that the intimacy and friendship thus contracted, may continue firm and unviolable, that nothing may abate our love and the delights of it, or ever seperate our persons any more.

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CHAP. XIV.

An act of exciting devotion by the example of others. DISCIPLE.

How plentiful is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! When I confider with what ardent piety, with what affectionate devotion, with what an amplified zeal, thy faints approach this heavenly supper; shame and confusion overwhelm me, conscious of my own, but lukewarm at the best, and two often perfectly stupid and frozen, heart; with what indifference and coldness I approach thy mysteries, and how little affected with thy mercies, how unprofitable under the gracious dispensation, I return. What a reproach is it, that my heart should not be totally inflamed with the excess of thy love; that I should have no sense, no apprehension, of my greatest happiness, no hungrings and thirstings after it? But, notwitstanding the moving examples of many excellent persons, should still continue void of all pathetical impressions; so scandalously unlike those pious souls, whose zeal overflow'd in tears of joy, whose hearts, as well as mouths drink thankfully at this fountain of life, whose appetites were fo strong as never to be fatisfied, till they had filled themselves with thy blessed body, and fed liberally, and with a fort of holy luxury indulged, at the celestial banquet.

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A faith so unshaken, so exalted, plainly confess'd they felt thy gracious presence; and that their Lord was known to them, as heretofore to the disciples at Emmaus, in breaking of bread. Luke xxiv. burning of their hearts within them was an irrefra-

gable

gable testimony of it. But how far short, alas! do I come unto their zeal and devotion? Look mercifully, Lord, upon my infirmities. And, if an equal portion of thy grace be too great a favour for thy poor unworthy servant; yet grant me such a degree, such a sense of thy goodness and wonderful love, that I may be as sincerely, tho' not so strongly, affected with it. If raptures and extasses of delight may not be my portion, yet deny me not improvement. But let my faith be strengthened, my hope consirmed, my love so illuminated with this sacrament, that, after having once tasted this heavenly manna, I may never more desire the onions and garlick of Egypt, nor in my heart turn back from so good a God.

I know thy mercy and thy power, to which nothing is impossible, nothing hard. I know thou canst, and I hope in thy good time thou wilt, visit with more abundant measures of thy grace, and fulfil all my petitions. This confidence I cherish, because my very desires are from thee. And it is fome comfort to me, that, tho' I am fenfible of my weakness and my wants yet I long and pant after supplies and strength; that I am not content with my mifery; but labour and pray, against my defects, and would gladly be better. And thus I will continue to do, till thou remove and vanquish my frailties, inspire a bright and ardent zeal, and make me a happy partaker, first of the virtuous disposition of thy devouter saints, and then of their reward and happiness.

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CHAP. XV.

Grace is the reward of humility and self-denial.

CHRIST.

CINCE thy wishes are so commendable, and thy defires of grace fincere, I will instruct thee how thou shalt obtain it. Know then, this bleffing is suspended upon certain conditions. It must be fought instantly, asked fervently, waited for patiently, received thankfully, preferved by humility, improved with diligence, and the time and measures of it submitted entirely to the wisdom and goodness of the heavenly donor. If thou feel few or no sparks of it in thy mind, this is a proper subject to exercife thy meekness and godly forrow, but not to excite despair, or immoderate concern. For God frequently gives that in an instant, and with a liberal hand, which men had long expected without success: He gratifies their constancy and patience, their importunity and perseverance in prayer, with benefits, which excellent reasons mov'd him to deny to their first requests, for the petitioners eternal advantage.

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Should mens earliest expectations be answered, or prevented, the mighty bleffing would be too exquifite for meer nature to bear. And therefore holy raptures, and exalted virtue, are wifely made the flow fruit of long time, and much patience. But, when thy defires are not fulfilled, when thou receivest no increase, or when the grace thou once enjoyedst is insensibly withdrawn; charge not God foolishly, but lament thy fins, as the occasion of this unhappiness. A small provocation may some-

times

times be a bar to great advantages. Tho' nothing indeed ought to be reputed small, which intercepts and hinders so valuable blessings. But be it little or great, let it be thy care to subdue and remove this obstruction, and then the desire of thy heart shall

be granted.

When once corrupt felf-love is fubdued, and the foul entirely fubmitted and refign'd to God, peace and fatisfaction will flow in abundantly upon thy mind. For nothing can be grievous or unpalatable, to one, who hath renounced all interests of his own, and hath no inclinations or defires left, but only, that he may be made an instrument of God's glory, and have all the counsel of the divine will, which is always best, fulfilled in and upon him. This man, fo divorced from private respects and all created comforts, is in a proper condition for receiving grace, and tafting the spiritual delights of contemplation and devotion. The veffel must be empty, before grace can be poured in; and when it is perfectly fo, God delights to fill it up to the brim. The more a man is dead to the world and himself, the more heavenly-minded, the more mortify'd and humble; the fwifter are the motions of heavenly grace towards him, the more liberal are its distributions, the more fenfible, and delightful, and wonderful, its comforts and effects upon his heart.

Then shall he see the loving-kindness of the Lord; then shall he seel his soul and all its powers enlarged, and even stand astonished at the happy change. Lo! Thus shall the man be blessed that feareth, and seeketh the Lord with all his strength, and suffereth not his heart to wander after vanity. This man shall receive the blessed sacrament with superlative effica-

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cy. He shall as truly be united to Christ in his foul, as the bread and wine, which represent him, are incorporated with the fubstance of his body. And that, which inclines God to be fo particularly propitious and bountiful to fuch a one, is that refigned temper of mind, which proposes the advancement of God's honour and glory, rather than his own advantage; and comes, more out of a fense of duty and just homage to his Saviour, than with a prospect of consolation and satisfaction to himself.

CHAP. XVI.

A prayer for relief in our wants and spiritual distresses.

DISCIPLE.

HEAR me, O sweetest and most beneficent Jesus, whom I now approach with illuminated defires of receiving thee into my foul. But how can I expect, that thou wilt not despise a place so unfit to entertain thy pure, thy glorious majesty? Thou knowest, Lord, my weaknesses and my wants; how great my fufferings, and how heinous my fins; how I am oppressed and afflicted, tempted and overpower'd; disorder'd with passion, and stained with pollution, To thee I fly for fuccour against my infirmities, for physick against my diseases, for support under my calamities and distresses. I cannot diffemble my condition, I need not publish it, when addreffing to one who knows all things, to whom my very inward parts are naked and open; to him, who alone can give effectual relief to my forrows, and fupply my pungent necessities. Thy wisdom knows,

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knows, what fuccours are most seasonable and proper for my circumstances, and how very slender and

low my stock of virtue is.

Behold, I stand before thee, a helpless creature; miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and weak, Rev. iii. fupplicating thy grace, or at least some fragments of it, to this hungry starving beggar. O let me not perish, but revive this finking wretch, with some crumbs of heavenly sustenance. Let me not be destroyed with cold, but warm me with thy love; let me not fall into the pit, but enlighten my blind eyes with the splendor of thy gracious presence. Give me a fettled distaste of worldly pleasures, and make all here below infipid and bitter to me. Reconcile me to croffes and afflictions, by fubmission and unwearied patience; and lessen every thing in this world, whether enjoyment or fuffering, by teaching me to despise and forget it. Raise my stupid heart up to Heaven, and fettle my affections there, that they may no longer wildly rove after the trifling objects of flesh and sense. Let me henceforth taste delight in nothing but thee, nor spend my money and labour for that which is not bread; for thou alone art meat indeed, and drink indeed; my love and joy, my delight and exceeding great reward, my perfect and sole good.

O that, now I am approaching the throne of grace, thou would'ft command thy divine spirit to descend from heaven into my soul! O that my sins and corrupt dispositions might be the burnt-offering consumed by it! that it might flame, and burn, and melt me down, purge away all my dross, and, by the efficacy of its powerful heat, refine, and change,

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and incorporate me with thy felf. Let me not, I befeech thee, be fent empty away: Let me not return hungry and thirsty from so splendid an entertainment; but work in me mightily, and deal bountifully with thy fervant, as thou usest to do unto those that love and fear thy name. I hope to find a wondrous alteration, and cannot think it strange, if I feel my benummed heart all sublimated, when I come to that fire, which ever burns without confuming; or, if I find an entire separation of all my worldly and gross affections, when heated thoroughly with that love, whose excellence it is, to purify the heart by the activity, and to enlighten blind understandings by the brightness of its flame.

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CHAP. XVII. An act of praise.

DISCIPLE.

Ook down, O Lord, with favour and kind acceptance upon thy poor unworthy, but fincere servant, now prostrating himself before thine altar, with a most devout zeal, and all the passionate and tender resentment, of which my heart is capable; wishing still, that these good affections were greater and more worthy of thee, and that I might meet and embrace my Lord, with all that perfection of holiness and ardent joy, by which thy best and dearest faints recommended their prayers and praises, and so eminently signalized themselves, in the celebration of this bleffed facrament. O God! my love and life, my only and eternal happiness, were but my power proportioned to my will, none of those excellent Z Z 2

cellent patterns ever express'd more awful reverence, more ardent devotion, more earnest love, more humble gratitude than I at this time am disposed, and

most earnestly wish, to express.

I know, O Lord, how far I am from being worthy to receive at thy hand fuch plentiful effusions of grace, fuch diftinguishing marks of thy kindness, as enabled them to be fo pious and exemplary in all their addresses to thee. But yet my heart, and all its affections, fuch as they are, I dedicate to thy fer-The utmost a devout mind can conceive or defire, I offer in thy presence, with all possible respect, with fincerity as unfeigned, as if my zeal were much more bright and inflamed. I do it without the least reserve; all I have and am, is entirely thine; most freely confecrated to thy use, my God and Lord, my almighty creator, and most merciful redeemer. Take then a full possession of one, upon so many accounts thy own. Enter, and dwell, and reign in me, absolute, and for ever. Behold I open my arms wide, to embrace my Lord and spouse. I desire at this time to receive thee into my heart, with the fame reverence and humility, the same respectful gratitude and love, the fame faith and hope, and religious defire, with which the holy mother received thee in her virgin womb; when she returned that pious answer to the angel, who brought the glad tidings of thy mysterious incarnation: Behold the bandmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word, Luke i.

And, as thy fervant John Baptist, that greatest among them that are born of women, thy messenger sent to prepare thy way before thee, felt the power-

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ful influence of the divine presence, and confess'd it, by leaping in his mother's womb for joy; Luke i. As he, ascribing nothing to himself, did afterwards declare himself the bridegroom's friend whose joy was full in hearing the bridegroom's voice; John iii. fo do I desire to offer myself, without any exception, or regard to private interest, and to rejoice and live in thee alone for ever. May all the zeal and raptures. the extafies and heavenly visions of the faints; may all their virtues and their praises; may every creature in heaven and earth; may all that I have ever prayed for, and all that pray for me, contribute to thy glory; and may thy name be, only and ever, magnified by all and each of them.

Accept, O Lord, my-hearty wishes and defires of praise and thanksgiving, as infinite as thy majesty; for they are thine of right, and mayest thou be worthily bleffed by them. This is, and shall be, my daily, hourly prayer. Nor will I content my felf with wishing and endeavouring this, fingly and in my own person, but do most seriously invite and conjure all the bleffed spirits above, all thy faithful people upon earth, to join in this most just tribute of honour; and, in full concert and perfect harmony, to publish thy praise and glory, in all times and

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Come in, all ye nations and countries, all kindreds, and languages of the world, and bear your parts in finging forth the fweet, the faving, the holy name Raife your devotions, as high as human nature can go, for in this you can never exceed. And you devout disciples of this blessed master, as oft as you receive this holy facrament, fee that you reverenly

reverently adore this mystery of love. And then be fure with a most fervent faith, and universal charity, to beseech this gracious saviour, that the effects of his death may be as general as the design of it; that he who died for all, may be gloristed in the salvation of all. And may those supplications be successful in obtaining mercy, for yourselves, for every sinner, and for me, the chief of sinners in particular.

And, when you return from this precious heavenly feast, full of grace and joy, remember then to look back with tender compassion upon your weaker brethren; and wish, that every contrite and afflicted soul may be admitted to the like comforts, may feel the same wonderful efficacy from this mysterious table; and let not me, the least and most unworthy of your brethren, who want them the most of any, be denied a part in your charitable intercessions.

CHAP. XVIII.

Against the nice disputes concerning this sacrament.

CHRIST.

If thou would'st preserve thy faith incorrupt, and thy devotions from distraction, content thy self with reverencing and admiring these holy mysteries; and do not indulge a busy curiosity, in bold and unprositable enquiries concerning them. For this is the way to damp a godly zeal, and to perplex thy mind with intricate and endless doubts. Remember, it is the glory of God to conceal a thing, Prov. xxv. 2. and his supereminent wisdom and power procures itself just veneration, by doing more than man is able to comprehend. I do not mean by this

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fait kno tha to exact a blind obedience, but expect, and commend, the use of reason in the search of divine truth. Provided always, that it be tempered with sobriety and modesty, with tractableness and a due respect to what I my self have revealed in my word, and what my church hath faithfully delivered, in

her doctrines and expositions upon it.

Happy is that meekness and poverty of spirit, which industriously declines the rugged thorny paths of controversy and captious disputes; and walks in the plain smooth way of duty, and practical reliligion; which studies God's commands, and labours to understand things of a fize with its capacity; without troubling it felf about his decrees and dispensations. Too many instances there are of daring men. who, by prefuming to found the deep things of religion, have cavilled and argued themselves out of all religion. These men mistake their business. For the thing required of a christian, is not penetration, and fubtilty of wit, critical distinction, or fublime notions; but victorious faith, and an honest holy life; sobriety, and temperance, and chaftity, justice and charity, piety and devotion. How oft is reason puzzled, even in matters relating to creatures inferior to thy felf? And will not this reflection controul, and cure, an expectation fo extravagant and abfurd, as that of being able to give a clear account of things above thee; nay, of perfectly understanding thy great, thy infinite creator himfelf? Submit thy reason to revelation, and let humility, and reverence to God, recommend thy faith; and then, though thou canst not attain all knowledge, yet thou shalt be fure not to want any, that is necessary or profitable for thee. Many

Many men are much diffatisfied in their minds, with doubts concerning the true nature of faith. and difficulties which arise concerning my presence in the facrament. These doubts are not always finful, nor always from themselves; but frequently owing to the temptations of the devil, and industrioufly instilled by him, with wicked artifice, and malicious defign. Be not therefore too anxious upon these occasions. Trouble not thy self to argue nicely, nor employ thy thoughts upon the matter; nor hold thy felf concerned to be able to answer every objection, which he puts into thy head: But keep close to scripture, and do thy duty; and the enemy will foon retreat, when he finds thee neglect his attempts. Think not these inward distractions a fign that thou art forfaken of God. They are rather the contrary, and a mark of grace. God fuffers them to exercise thy patience, to try thy constancy, and to promote thy spiritual advantage. Wert thou a reprobate, thou would'st not thus be affaulted; for fuch the devil is fure of already, and temptations are thrown away upon them. They are the faithful, the fincere, the devout christians, whom he-disturbs and torments; for, in so doing, he hopes to enlarge his dominion, and to feduce those who were not his before.

Proceed then in thy christian course with resolution and patience, and still frequent the sacrament, with stedsast faith, and humble veneration. Whatever there thou sindest to exceed thy understanding, put it to God's account; and leave him to make it good, tho' thou can'st not conceive, how it should be done. He will not deceive thee; but they, who

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Jely upon their own understandings, are sure to deceive themselves. Remember, God hath said, that be walks and dwells with the bumble, and shews his ways to the meek; that he reveal'd himself to babes, that he opens the eyes of the honest and fincere; but hides his grace and knowledge from the proud, and wife in his own conceit. Reason (experience proves) may both deceive and be deceiv'd, for it is but human. But faith has God for its foundation, and cannot err; because it depends upon one who is truth it felf, and confequently incapable of mistaking,

or of imposing upon others.

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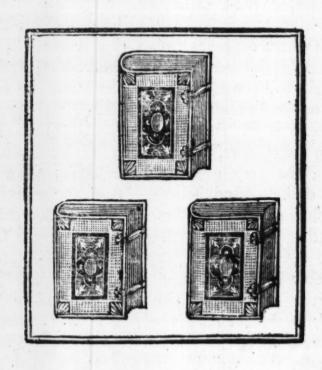
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'Tis therefore highly fit, and in matters of religion abfoldtely necessary, that these two principles should know their order, and respective stations; and each contain it felf within its proper limitation. Faith (which supposes a revelation received and acknowledg'd) challenges the highest place, and reafon ought to keep her distance, to serve and follow after, not to fet bounds to, or affume, and encroach, and usurp over, the other. For faith and charity are the two pillars, upon which christianity is supported; the two governing principles of a good man's opinions and actions. And their authority and influence is, in no one inflance, more confiderable, than in this of the bleffed facrament. God is infinite and eternal, his power unbounded, and incomprehensible. He does what soever pleaseth him in beaven and earth, and who can understand his counsel, or find out all his methods? If the works of God were fuch, as human reason could penetrate with eafe, they would lose great part of their glory. We should soon abate of our awe and veneration for their author, if his dealings were not above the power Aaa

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power of our tongues to express, and the utmost extent of our imagination to conceive. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and confess the wonders that he hath done for the children of men! Psal. cvii. For great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Rev. xiv. How unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out! Rom. xi.

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To make this as compleat as the London Edition, it is thought proper to add Dr. Stanbope's Meditations and Prayers for Sick Persons; for which Reason take the Preface to it as follows.

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HE Publisher of this Edition, being desirous to render this Book as generally T useful as it was possible; and considering, that the two great Occasions of Extraordinary Devotion are the Season of receiving the Bleffed Sacrament of

the Lord's Supper, and that of Sickness; thought the Former reasonably well provided for, in the Fourth Book of the foregoing Translation. And I was more willing to provide for the Latter, in regard a great part of that which follows lay by me, some time since composed at the Request of a Lady (now I hope with God) who defired my Assistance in preparing some Meditations, that might be proper for her then very weak and languishing Condition. The manner in which they were drawn, seemed not ill to suit with the Temper of the Author, to which they are fixed. And the Defign of casting them into this Form is to promote, in some measure, those Reasonings with a man's own mind, which at all times indeed, but especially in such Circumstances, would prove of excellent Advantage, if frequent Use did but render them more familiar.

I am far from thinking, that thefe few Sheets have any thing in them of equal Perfection, with those many pious and well weighed Treatifes, written by Others upon this Subject. Much less would I have the Reader imagine, that either This, or Those, can supersede the Necessity and Benefit of the Prayers of the Church, and the Advice of our Spiritual Physicians. These ought always to be confulted in the first Place, before Mat-

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The PREFACE.

ters come to Extremity; and a conscientious Person, after all his own Care, will find Business enough for them. But the Exercises of Piety prescribed in such Tracts will be good Helps, and fill up their Intervals very well, which the Languishings of a Sick Bed many times allow, when it cannot be expected, that the ordinary Guides of our Souls should be ready with their Attendance. Whose Directions in the Measures of Mens Repentance, while under the afflicting Hand of God, and the proper Methods of expressing their Thankfulness when deliver'd from it, as well as their prudent Comforts administred to wounded and contrite Hearts, will notwithstanding be always seasonable and necessary.

The devout Christian, who converses much with the Word of God, and the Offices of the Church, will find himself able to make large Additions to the following Devotions. In which it was much more difficult to restrain my Pen, than to expatiate a great deal farther. But I considered the Condition of the Persons they were intended for; and therefore contented myself with such short Hints under each Head, as the Weakness of that would bear. If what I have offered here may tend to the promoting of Piety, and the sanktifying such Dispensations of Providence to any one of my Christian Brethren, by kindling in them a holy Zeal, and inspiring good Purposes, I have my End. And this, with God's Blessing I hope it will, and heartily pray that it may in some Degree be capable of.

GEO. STANHOPE.

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Meditations and Prayers

FOR

SICK PERSONS.

MEDITATION I.

Upon sickness in general, the author, causes, and end of it.



OME, my foul, and let us reason together, concerning the things that have befallen us. This body, to which thou art united, slags and droops; the vigor of it is abated, its beauty impaired and decayed; the limbs once well knit, are grown feeble,

and with great difficulty fustain their weight, or accomplish thy purposes. They scarce perform any office aright; and when they do, it is with pantings and tremblings, with weariness and faintiness. They seem to groan and sink under their burden; and each member, which was formerly wont to serve

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ferve thee, with wonderful chearfulness and activity, now calls for fuccours from abroad, and is no longer able to support it self. This is such a change, as ought not to be felt only, but well confidered too. Be not thou therefore like to the borfe and mule, which have no understanding, Pfal. xxxii. 10. but lose all impressions, as soon as the sense of the stroke ceases. It is thy priviledge and duty both, to reflect and meditate; to call back things already past, and anticipate those which are to come; and, as for such as are actually prefent, to acquaint thy felf with the causes and reasons, the ends and uses of them, as well as with the nature and quality of the things All these are operations proper to a themselves. reasoning soul, and the present occasion calls upon thee for a due exercise of them all. For thou canst not be fick, as becomes a man, and a christian, without enquiring, whence, and wherefore it is, that thou art fo. The first and most necessary step, both toward the patient enduring of the anguish, and the fuccessful application of the remedies, is to learn the true cause of our disease.

II. Know therefore most certainly, that what the Holy Ghost hath spoken concerning affliction in general, is in an especial manner true concerning this particular branch of it, It cometh not forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, Job v. 6. Our selves indeed were taken thence, and moulded into man. But this was not the effect of any natural cause; the God of nature, by his almighty power, commanded earth and ashes into this beauteous and wonderful structure of a human body. And he alone, who created and formed it, commands

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mands it back into its native dust again. Every difease and decay, whether it be the effect of accident or time, whether what we usually call violent and fhortning our days, or whether according to the course of nature, and flower declinings of age; all are but so many shocks, by which this fleshly tabernacle is shaken, or moulders by degrees, and, by growing more ruinous and uninhabitable, gives the foul warning to feek another dwelling. And thefe are all disposed, by a most steady and particular providence; and, if traced up to their first original, have a cause as sublime as the body it self hath. Nature indeed goes on in a smooth and settled course; and so the hand that guides this engine is far distant, and feldom observed; but even nature it self is God's instrument, tho' the process and the long chain of causes be so intricate, and withal so familiar, and frequently alike, that the events refulting from thence cease to be wonderful in our eyes. A cold, or a furfeit; a weak constitution, or impure blood; unwholfome diet, and ill hours; neglect of means, and carelefness of our health; advice taken too late, or a medicine improper, or out of feafon; these are what we commonly charge our indispositions and our miscarriages upon. And thus far we may say true; but, if we go no higher, we stop a great deal too foon. For it is eafy to differn a hand above, that directs and limits all these; that smites the strong, and preferves the tender; flays by the flightest accidents, and recovers from the most desperate; and this, in a manner most surprizing, such as no human art or skill had any expectation, or can give any account of.

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III. If then thou hast convinced thy felf, that the finger of God is in all these things; pursue this thought (my foul) a little farther; and fee what a fair and wide scene of knowledge and heavenly wisdom it will foon open to thee. For what is God? Is not he that very being, infinitely powerful, and wife, and just, and good? Is it not he, who made thee, and fustains thee, the same who governs and disposes this whole world, and all the creatures in it, after the counsel of his own will? He, with whom the lives of his fervants are exceeding precious? In whose fight the hairs of our head are all numbred? Without whose permission not a sparrow can fall to the ground, and in whose estimation the meanest of those, that are made after his own image, are of infinitely more value than many sparrows? Remember, that fuch is the author of thy difease: And this fingle remembrance will lead thee to fuch refolutions, fuch holy and feafonable reflections as cannot, if duly attended, and carefully improved, but work in thee that frame of mind, which best suits thy present circumstances, and must needs dispose thee to reap large and lasting advantages from them. For how canst thou consider his power, and not dread the dire effects of an angry, or rest secure under the favour and protection of a reconciled God? Or how canst thou meditate on his wisdom, and not be contented with his appointments for thee? Or on his of u justice, and not be more zealously concerned, to seek a pardon for those sins, which have provoked, not and made thee an object of it? Or on his goodness, and not be even thankful under thy fufferings? For low; what is grievous to flesh and blood, is yet ordained Psal. to excellent and heavenly purposes, and it is out of very

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very kindness that thou art thus afflicted: How canst thou think upon his right of creation, without acknowledging his bounty, in giving and continuing thy being, and all the comforts of it? Or how, lastly, upon his preference of mankind above the rest of the creatures here below; without observing the peculiar prerogative, which renders men more valuable, that of a noble and reasonable soul, which the others want; and so cherishing the hope of immortality, whereunto man only, of all here below, is appointed? A hope, which affures us, we shall not perish, but only be changed; and, in the midst of languishing and departing struggles, can bear up under, nay, can triumph over the agonies of death. Here then will I fix my thoughts, I will approach the almighty with a fong, and address my prayer unto the God of my life.

HYMN.

G OD is the Lord, even God alone: He killeth, and he maketh alive, he woundeth, and he bealeth, Deut. xxxii. 39.

Thou, Lord, hast power of life and death, I Sam. ii. 6. Thou scourgest, and shewest mercy, Wisd. xvi. 13. Thou leadest to the gates of the grave, and bringhis of up again, Job xiii, 2.

to It is he that holdeth our foul in life: and suffereth ed, not our feet to slip, Psal. lxvi. 8.

ess, And again, when we are minished and brought For low; thro' fickness, thro' any affliction or sorrow; ned Psal. cvii, 39, 40.

Tho' he suffer us to be evil intreated: yet belpeth be the meek out of misery, or maketh all his bed in his fickness, Pfal. xli. 3.

For it is neither herb, nor mollifying plaister, that restoreth men to health: but thy word, O Lord,

which healeth all things, Wisd. xvi. 12.

My time is always in thy hand; unto God the Lord belong the issues of life and death, Psal. xxxi. 17. lxviii. 20.

All creatures wait upon thee: when thou openest

thy hand they are filled with good, Pfal. civ. 27.

When thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; when thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; when thou takest away their breath, they die, and are turned again to their dust, ver. 28, 29, 30.

I will fing to the Lord as long as I live: I will

praise my God, while I have my being, ver. 33. My meditation of him shall be sweet; and my joy

shall be in the Lord, ver. 34. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face: my heart said unto me, Thy face, Lord, will I feek, Pfal. xxvii. 8.

O hide not thy face from me: nor cast away thy

servant in displeasure, ver. 9.

Thou hast been my helper: leave me not, neither

for fake me, O God of my falvation, ver. 10.

Some put their trust in strength of nature; and fome in medicines: but I will remember the name of the Lord our God, Pfal. xx. 7.

O put not your trust (in physicians, nor) in any child of man: for there is no help in them, Pfal.

cxlvi. 2.

But bleffed is he that bath the God of Facob for his help: and whose hope is in the Lord his God, ver. 4.

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Save, Lord, and hear me, O King of Heaven: when I call upon thee, Pfal. xx. 9.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c. As it was in the Beginning, &c.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, the father of the spirits of all flesh, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in beaven and earth: I defire, with the profoundest bumility and reverence, to prostrate both my foul and body before thee, begging that thou would'st give me grace, to behold and admire thy providence, in all thy dispensations towards my self and the rest of mankind. I acknowledge it thy bounty, that I ever was at all; and adore thy mercy and long Juffering, for preserving me thus long in the land of the living. My many days and years of beal: b and comfort were thy gift; and the recoveries from former ficknesses, as well as the prevention of those dangers and diseases I never felt, are owing to thee alone. Man doth not live by bread and care, nor is relieved by medicines only, but by the word and blessing which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Grant me, I befeech thee, a strong and due sense of my entire dependance upon thee, and grace to improve under, and behave my self in conformity to that unquestionable truth. That whether the means used for my ease and relief succeed, I may ascribe all the glory and thanks to thee alone: Or whether thou thinkest fit to deny them their intended effects, I may bumble my self under thy mighty hand, and remember that thou, Lord, bast done it. Inspire me, I beseech thee, with that true and heavenly wisdom, which may help me to B b b 2 discern

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discern aright the reasons, and enable me to answer the ends of this correction, and all other thy dealings with me. That I may patiently bear the rod, and glority him who hath appointed it; and, in all conditions, submit my self entirely to thy good pleasure, and praise God in the day of my visitation. So shall this weakness of my body contribute to the strengthning of my virtues, and the health of my soul; through the merits of him, who redeemed them both at the price of his own precious blood; even thy son, and my ever blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MED. II.

Of the power of God, and the affections arising from thence, viz. Dread of his anger, and trust in his protection.

I. WHICH way foever we turn our eyes, ten thousand objects meet us, which all prove and preach to us the almighty power of God. The glorious fabrick of the universe, and every thing contained therein, nay even the meanest, and, in human esteem, most despicable creature, proclaims aloud the omnipotence of its maker. And the good order, in which these are contained, does as much magnify his preserving, as their existence does his creating, power. But man needs not look abroad: Himself is ten thousand arguments to demonstrate this to himself. The curious structure of his body, the excellencies of its divine inhabitant the soul, and the wonderful amazing union, and mutual correspondence

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respondence of both these, could be the workmanship of nothing less than omnipotence. This mixture of spirit and matter, of perishing and immortal: the fagacity of the one to influence and govern. the readiness of the other to obey, and be actuated: the sprightliness and vigor, or else the heaviness and disorder, and reciprocal disabilities, which each of these convey to the other, are most certainly the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Alas! how should man subsist one moment. even in the state of his greatest perfection, did not this great artificer watch over his own work, and constantly sustain it; did not he check and moderate that conflict, which the warring elements of our body are continually engaging in? But especially, now that the corruption of our nature, and the transgression of our first parent, hath let death and diseases look upon us; there needs no repeated infliction. For, if God be but passive, and withdraw his restraint, the enemy is always ready to devour us, and we carry the feeds of torment and destrution about our own persons. And God hath so decreed, that every man shall once fall by the stroke of death. A decree, which, in our greatest strength, in the very bloom and beauty of youth, contrary to our own expectations, or the fears of our most beloved friends, he fometimes executes: To teach us, that our being is wholly precarious, that we have nothing stable here, no title even to life it self; but are all concluded by a fentence already pass'd. For all our days are in the nature of a reprieve; the prolonging whereof is an act of mere mercy, as the cutting it short is exempt from the least appearance of injustice. God then cannot want means and opportunities

portunities for this. All nature is his; the malice of wicked men, the spight of our foes, the mistaken kindness of our friends, the errors of our physicians, and the misapplication of their medicines, are all directed and over-ruled to this end. The humours of our bodies, the temper of the air, and every element indeed when he gives the word, turns Executioner; or, in truth, if he but please to permit, the thing will do it felf. He burns us up by fevers, or drowns us in dropfies; strikes us dead in a moment by apoplexies, buries us alive by palfies, confumes us by flow and imperceptible degrees, with lingering confumptions. Thou feeft, my foul, how eafily God can do these things, by a thousand instances of friends and acquaintance gone before thee, and by thy own yet more fensible experience, in this declining and languishing body of thine. Thou art fensible now, that no flesh is able to stand before God, and how quickly we are blafted by the breath of his displeasure. That, to him alone belong power and strength, and to poor mortal man, nothing but mifery and weakness, and vanity.

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II. Surely (my foul) had these impressions been fresh and deep upon me heretofore, they would have restrained my wild career in sin, and prevented many grievous and bold transgressions, which I have reason to sear might provoke the divine majesty to cast me upon this bed of sickness. For do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Alas! my own condition has taught me, how vain and sool-hardy it is, not only to sight against God, but not to sear and stand in perpetual awe of him: How satal to play with this consuming sire:

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And I cannot but wish with all the faculties of my foul, that I had better confider'd this point long ago, For he is a terrible and a mighty God; and when he enters into controverfy with mankind, no flesh can withstand it. At least, my foul, let us make that good use of this reflection now, to be unfeignedly forry for what is past; and more cautious and observant for the time to come. The flower is wither'd indeed, and droops its feeble head; but it is not quite cut down. O let us yet humble our felves in his fear, and confider, what a yet more dreadful vengeance God hath in store, for hardened and obstinate wretches. If the decays and pains of the body alone are fo grievous, how shall we bear the perdition of both body and foul? How shall we dwell with everlasting burnings? If the rod of God, these comparatively light punishments, reprefent to us the terrors of his angry justice; who can bear the approach of that difmal day, when he shall come in thunder and flames, to make an absolute end of this whole world, and deliver wicked finners over to unavoidable destruction? An eternity of torments! Jesus defend us! Who can entertain even the most distant thought of it, without trembling, confusion and astonishment? Fall down then, my foul, and humble thy felf under the mighty hand of God; that thou may'st not perish with this frail body. Lofe no time in making thy peace, but work with all thy might; especially now, that the day of life feems to decline, and the night comes on, wherein no man can work.

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III. Remember, my foul, for thy encouragement, that, if thou abound in the work of the Lord, thy

thy labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, I Cor. xx. 58. He is no less mighty to save than to destroy; with him no word is impossible; and, if he will, he can even yet raise this feeble body, and restore it to perfect health and alacrity. Nay, he will certainly do it, if that be best for me; and if it be not, he will do yet more. For there will come a day, in which this vile earthly part shall be enlivened again; and, if it moulder into dust, and pass thro' infinite different forms, yet will he pursue this body through all its changes, collect its dispersed atoms, command the little heaps of dust to awake, and translate it into a glorious and a spiritual body. I Cor. xv. A body fit for a state of incorruption, and the inheritance of that kingdom, where this flesh and blood, which we now set so partial and extravagant a value upon, is not worthy to enter. I will therefore strengthen my self in the power and promises of my God; and, with holy Job, tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him, Job xiii. 15. For even then I will lay me down, in hope of a joyful refurrection to eternal life; and commit my body like feed, to the ground; not to be loft, but improved, by corrupting there. For thou, O God, art unchangeable, and thy promifes without repentance; and promised thou hast, that our vile body shall be fashion'd like unto Christ's glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby thou art able to subdue all things to thy self. Phil. iii. 21.

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EJACULATIONS.

IN thee therefore, O Lord, will I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion, but deliver me in thy righteousness, and save me. Pfal. lxxi.

Be thou my strong hold whereunto I may alway re-fort: thou hast promised to help me, for thou art my bouse of defence, and my castle.

Deliver me, O my God, from the adversary's hand:

Preserve me from the hunter of souls.

He layeth snares, and is mighty to destroy: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high is mightier.

Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for:

thou hast been my bope even from my Youth.

Through thee have I been holden up ever fince I was born: Thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb; my praise shall be always of thee.

O cast me not away in the time of my distress: for-

sake me not, when my strength faileth me.

Let them be confounded and perish that are against my foul: let the wicked spirits be cover'd with shame and dishonour, that seek to do me evil.

As for me, I will patiently tarry the Lord's leisure: and will put my trust in the Lord, Psal. xxvii.

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the last day upon the earth, Job xix. 25.

And the after my skin worms destroy this body; yet

in my flesh shall I see God: ver. 26.

Whom I shall see for my self: And mine eyes shall behold, and not another, ver. 72.

For he is the resurrection and the life: And whose ever believeth in him, tho' he die, yet shall he live again, Job xi. 25.

Glory be to the Father, &c. As it was in the Beginning, &c.

PRAYER.

Most glorious Lord God, terrible in thy judgments, and wonderful in all thy dealings towards the children of men; possess my soul, I beseech thee, with awful and becoming apprehensions of thy majesty, give me a serious sense and sorrow, for ever baving hardned my heart from thy fear, and provoked that vengeance which can consume me in a moment. Lord, convince me whom I ought to dread, and let me never, for the gratifying any sinful inclination, forget any more the Lord my maker, and incur the displeasure of him, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell. And, as I implore thy grace, that this consideration of thy power may effectually restrain all my unruly appetites; so, I beseech thee, let it be my stay and confidence in all dangers and distresses. That, for saking the broken reeds of all worldly succours, I may put my whole trust in thy mercy; and, evermore serving thee in boliness and pureness of living, may even in death it self be more than conquerer. Even in that joyful day, when all enemies shall be destroyed: when thy children shall come forth from the dark prifons of the grave, and shine like suns in the kingdom of thee their father. Grant this thou rock of my foul, for thy dear son fesus Christ's sake.

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Of the justice of God: And the penitential forrow resulting from it.

I. OD is a being infinitely perfect and good; I the supreme and original good; the author and maker of all things; and cannot therefore be supposed, either to hate what himself hath made, or to have given being to any thing, with a defign to render it miserable. His providence and power, which made the subject of the two former meditations, are, in their own nature and primitive intention, defigned for the benefit and fecurity of his creatures. And, if at any time they become the instruments or dispensers of grief and pain; this is an effect purely accidental; an operation fo foreign, that it is even extorted from them, and wholly imputable to some other cause. And this is the case of mankind; once favour'd above all their fellow creatures, and fafe under the shelter and smiles of an almighty protector: But, by their own fault, deprived of this defence; left naked and exposed to mischiefs and sufferings; and not only disarmed of their furest guard, but in perpetual danger of being destroy'd, by that very hand, which was formerly their friend and defender. O wretched consequences of fin! that did not only render our first parents and all their posterity liable to bodily death, and all the diseases and pains that lead to it; but left in us a fatal aversion to all good, and a strong propensity Ccc 2 to

to all evil. By indulging hereof we add our own actual guilt, to that which our finful parents had derived down to us; and by iniquities without number, by wilful, repeated, habitual, and daring transgressions, confirm and aggravate this sentence of death, and arm the justice of God against our selves.

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II. Wonder not then, if thou feeft so many dreadful spectacles of affliction in the world; nor murmur, when thou thy felf art bound in the fame fetters, and fore laden with the burthen of affliction. But remember, that God is righteous, and thou, and these people are wicked; that he is holy and just, as well as good, and, tho' he does not willingly grieve the children of men, yet their iniquities put a fort of violence upon him, which he cannot re-They quite weary him out, and render it impossible, (that is, inconsistent with his other attributes and the perfection of his nature) to let fuch men go always unpunished. Nay, even in those infinitely more dreadful torments of another world, his perfections are concerned to vindicate themselves; for tho' these be terrible, above what we are able to express or conceive, yet are they just. And, at the fame time that we may be apt to question, whether so great severity be consistent with the character of our judge, we prove the wisdom of our lawgiver; and, that even eternal pains were necessary, fince even all this will not contain us in our duty, and effectually restrain us from transgressing.

III. And this, my foul, is thy case. These everlasting plagues are the deserved wages of thy wickedness. vn

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edness. For do but descend into thy self, (as it becomes thee to do, now more especially) and there take an exact furvey of thy miseries and frailties; thy raging passions, and ungovern'd appetites: Ask thy felf, what abuses and misemployments of health thou hast been guilty of. Whether thou hast not neglected and forgot God and Heaven too much. and been too full of follicitude and fondness for this present world; whether thou hast not slighted his worship and sacrament, and difregarded his word, or whether these have been formally and coldly frequented. Examine the heaviness of thy affections, the wandrings and negligence of thy mind, in publick and private devotions. [Here it may be convenient to instance in any other particular against our duty to God.] See again the violation of justice and charity to thy neighbour, whether thou hast honestly discharged the offices of the several capacities and relations God hath placed thee in; [A Husband or Wife, a Master or Mistress, a Son or Daughter, a Magistrate, a Subject, a Parent, a Brother or Sister, and the like.] If thou hast not been guilty of gross and manifest injustice in thy dealings, yet hast thou done wrong to no man's foul, by ill advice, or wicked example? Nor to the bodies of any, by malice or contempt, by ill treatment, cruel usage, want of compassion and care for their infirmities? What reputations hast thou injured by scandal and censure; by false and uncharitable judgments; by busy meddling with matters that concern thee not; by officioufly fpreading, or too haftily believing ill reports; by encouraging, repeating, and being pleafed with detracting or uncharitable reflections; or if by none of these, yet at least by neglecting to reprove, or

to discountenance, a slandering tongue, and to deliver the innocent from its fecret stabs? [Here again be particular in any other fins you have been guilty of against your neighbour. Turn thy eyes inward once more, and behold the breaches of that duty thou owest to thy self; the intemperance and irregularity of thy defires; the murmurings and discontents; the infirmities indulged; the passions unsubdued; the negligence in thy greatest concern; the love of unlawful, and the abuse of lawful, diversions and These are things so incident to our state, that no man's conscience can speak peace to him in them all; and happy art thou in those, where thine condemns thee not. But know withal, that God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things, I John iii. 20. He keeps exact account of thy lurking corruptions, and fecret faults; the unobserved, or the long fince forgotten, misdemeanors of thy life. The dreadful catalogue whereof, could they be fet before thee, would give a difmal prospect full of horror and confusion, and intolerable amazement. So that thou must of necessity acknowledge thy self a companion of filth and mifery; a wretch, that, if God should enter into judgment with, thou hast reason to expect nothing better than indignation and fury; to be fet up as a mark of his vengeance, and, by some swift exemplary destruction, hurried violently away into the hottest flames of hell.

IV. Thus much I am fadly fenfible of, and do stand condemned out of my own mouth. And thus far the circumstances of all mankind are the same, that if God should be extreme to mark what is done amis, the very best of us all could not abide it. Pfal.

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exxx. 3, 4. But, bleffed be God, though matters are deplorable, they are not quite desperate; for there is mercy with him, and his justice is satisfied. The price and purchase of our souls is paid; our forfeited lives are ranfomed and redeemed; our ranfom in value exceeds the whole world; even his own beloved and only begotten fon; who spared not his own life, but willingly poured out his foul to death; and is thereby become a facrifice and atonemeut for the fins of wretched mortals. He hath promulged glad tidings of reconciliation and repentance, of pardon and peace. He came to fave finners, even the chief of finners. Our God desireth not the death of any; provided they believe, and fincerely obey him: Not according to the shekel of the fanctuary, which requires unfinning perfection; but after the standard of the new covenant, which allows for human frailties, accepts forrow for the past; amendment for the time to come, a fervent love of God, and honest and diligent endeavours to ferve him. This is a faying worthy to be accepted indeed; this is the comfort and confidence of poor returning finners. And, while I can see by faith the penalty of eternal damnation released, by virtue of the blood of this lamb of God flain to take away the fins of the world, I will fubmit with patience to the temporal punishments inflicted by my provoked God; and thankfully accept the ficknesses and afflictions of this present life, as fo many warnings and calls to repentance.

V. And fure (my foul) we shall take care to make this good use of them. For these are the discipline of the Lord; and if, after all that is come upon me for my evil deeds, and for my great trespasses

passes, seeing that thou, my God, hast punished me less than my iniquities deserve; if I should again violate thy commandments, thou would'ft certainly be angry, till thou had'ft utterly confumed me ; Ezra ix. 13. and torment me fo much the more, for neglecting fo great falvation. I take therefore this chaftifement with all poffible fubmiffion; and with unfeigned forrow confess my manifold offences. plore thy mercy who art justly displeased at me; and fince in the midst of life we are in death, I cry earnestly to thee for succour; and beg, that howsoever thou thinkest fit to dispose of this corruptible body, thou would'ft look graciously upon me in thy dear fon, and not deliver my poor foul into the bitter pains of eternal death; but pity and fave me for Christ Tefus his fake. Amen.

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Here may be repeated the xxxviii and li. Psalms. Then the confession in the communion-service.

Almighty God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, &c.

Or elfe the three prayers at the end of the commination.

O Lord we beseech thee, &c.

O most mighty God, &c.

Turn thou me, O good Lord, &c. After either of which, fay as follows.

PRAYER.

Visitation of the sick.

Most mercifull God, who according to the multitude of thy mercies, dost so put away the sins of those who truly repent, that thou remembrest them no more; grant me, I beseech thee, true repentance and thy holy spirit; and then open thine eye of mercy upon my languishing condition, and give me the comfort of pardon and forgiveness. Renew in me most loving father whatsoever hath been decayed by fraud and the malice of the devil, or my own carnal will and frailness. Preserve

serve and continue me in the unity of thy church: guard me by thy power from all the assaults of the tempter, and suffer bim not to take advantage of my weakness. Consider, I befeech thee, my contrition, accept my tears, hear my own prayers, and those of others on my behalf, and asswage my pains, as shall seem to thee most expedient for me. In thy mercy, O Lord, I put my full trust; in thy mercy alone, and in the merits and sufferings of my crucified saviour. Impute not, O Lord, unto me my former fins, but strengthen me with thy bleffed spirit; and whenever thou art pleased to take me hence, take me into thy favour, thro' the merits of thy dearly beloved fon, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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M E D. IV.

Of the wisdom and goodness of God,

T A S there no other confideration to compose the mind, but that alone of our fufferings being just, this should in reason persuade us to the constant exercise of meekness, and patience, and contentedness under them. For, as the prophet urges very well; Wherefore doth a mortal man complain; even a man for the punishment of his sin? Lam. The thief upon the cross notwithstanding all the hardning of his former profligate life, yet pacified himself under his pains, and reproved his reviling companion, with this reflection, that they were under the condemnation justly, and received but the due reward ru- of their evil deeds, Luke xxiii. 41. But we have yet abundantly more, to quiet our repining thoughts, and filence all complaints; when the violence of an Affliction, or the fufferings of a fick bed, would provoke us to impatience. Our fins have been many and great enough to make God our enemy, and cry Ddd but

but too loud for the utmost rigors of his vengeance: yet those adversaries are not the wounds and bruises of an enemy, but the chastisements of a father. One that fmites us indeed, but it is in righteousness and friendship; and only with a design to reprove and reform us. Observe what heavenly comforts the Apostle hath left behind, and how God himself hath explained the nature and intent of his own dispensa-My fon, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, For whom the Lord loveth he chafteneth, and fcourgeth every fon whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you, as with his fons; for what fon is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastned usafter their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yeildeth the peaceable Fruit of righteoufness, unto them that are exercised thereby. Heb. xii.

II. What now can more illustrate the wisdom of providence, than the converting our sharpest calamities into occasions of our virtue and happiness? And which of all our calamities is more likely to contribute to our reformation, than those of sickness and pain? For these, by inflicting our own persons, are most sensible and grievous to be born; and, by punishing the body, for the sake and service of which, most, if not all, our wickednesses are committed, they meet with the very cause, and go to the root

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of the disease, and so are best sitted to perfect the cure. Our physician of souls is both skilful and kind; he will not give us over out of a cruel indulgence to our own ease. Our father answers his character, and gives seasonable correction to prevent our utter undoing. But in all this there is the prudence of the physician mixt with the tenderness of the parent. The one would not prescribe the bitter cup, unless he knew it necessary and best for us; and if our circumstances call for correction, it is with gentleness and reluctancy, with pain and yearning of

bowels, that the other fcourges.

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III. Do thou therefore, O my foul! confider, who chuses for thee, and learn to resign thy self to his disposals; for they are the appointments of one, who is wifer than thou art, and who loves thee better than the tenderest mother could. Do thou likewise confider, why he chuses for thee, and learn to improve under the feeming feverities of fuch difpenfa-Take gladly the wholesome physick, and fecure a good work to thy felf. Have no defires or wishes of thy own, but, with a constant reserve to the good pleasure of God, think, and be assured, that what he does is best. Best in it self, and best for thee too, if thy own fault hinder it not. Alas! we know not what to pray for as we ought, and should therefore beg nothing positively, but that God would do what he fees most expedient. Ask therefore my foul, that he would make thee an instrument of his own glory; that he would support thee in these Tryals, and not suffer thee to be tempted above that thou art able; that he would command all things to work together for thy good; and for the rest, take thy saviour for thy pattern, and, as oft as Ddde

thou prayest, that the cup may pass from thee, befure forget not to add, from the very bottom of thy soul, nevertheless, O father, not my will, but thine be done.

IV. And, to render the cup thou art now drinking as little unpalatable as may be, forget not also to fustain thy felf, with the comforts even of thy weakest condition. Seriously observe, how gracious the Lord is; how he hath not only spared, when thou haft deserved punishment, but in the very midst of his wrath hath thought upon mercy. If thy pains be not perpetual thank him for thy intervals of eafe and refreshment: If they be not sharp and extreme, thank him for the abatement and moderation of them. If thou canst recruit thy feeble spirits with sleep, thank him for clofing up thy eyes, in gentle reviving flumbers; if he hold thy eyes waking, thank him for the opportunities of meditating and praying to him in the night feason. Yea, thank him especially for continuing to thee thy understanding and thy fenses; and, that he hath given thee the power and the grace to make a good and holy use of these; that the length of thy fickness hath been so much a larger opportunity of preparing for that important change, which, not this languishing body of thine only, but also all those thou leavest behind in full health and beauty, and vigor, must shortly undergo. If thou endurest much; consider this is a good method of withdrawing thy affections from the world, and make thee thirst aud pant more earnestly after the lafting joys of a better place. If a tedious lingering distemper assault, and almost weary out thy patience, think how much rather this is to be chosen, than the raging frencies of a fever, or the sudden stroke

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stroke of an appoplexy. Reflect upon the condition of those wretches, who are fnatched out of the world it may be, in an act of damning fin; but however in an inftant; without fo much as the power, or leifure, to feek pardon, or peace, to commit their fouls to God, or fo much as once supplicate his mercy at the last gasp. O! what would they have given, how much more would they gladly have endured to purchase this long warning, these slow and solemn approaches of death, the happy advantages thou now enjoyest of trimming thy lamp, and putting thy foul in readiness to meet the bridegroom at his coming? For, tho' we ought indeed to expect him every hour, even in our most established health; yet well is it for that fervant, who receives express notice of his mafter's coming, and takes care so to provide for it, as in zealous prayers, and devout wishes to go out and meet him; and, having on the wedding garment, waits only for his last call, to enter with him to the marriage.

EJACULATIONS,

HY art thou so heavy, O my soul! and why art thou so disquieted within me? Still put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance, and my God. Psal. xliii. 5, 6.

The Lord bath chastened and corrected me; but be bath not given me over unto destruction. Psal. xviii.

18.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right: and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be youlded. Pfal. cxix. 75.

It is of the Lord's mercies, that I was not long ago consumed : because bis compassions fait not. Lam. iii. 22.

The Lord is my portion, Saith my Soul: therefore

will I hope in him. Verf. 24.

It is good for a man that he should constantly hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord : for

the Lord will not cast off for ever. Vers. 26.

But tho' he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. Verf. 31 32. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him. Pfal. ciii. 13.

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In the multitude of the forrows which I have in my beart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul. Pfal.

xciv. 19.

For, I know, That with thee there is mercy: and with my God is plenteous redemption. Pfal. cxxx. 7.

O remember not my old fins, but have mercy upon me, and that soon, for I am come to great misery. Pfal. lxxix. 8.

Heal my foul, which hath finned against thee : and then let the Lord do what seemeth bim good. Psal. xli. 4. 1 Sam. iii. 18.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c.

As it was in the Beginning, &c.

PRAYER.

HEar me, Almighty and most merciful God and Saviour, extend thy accustomed goodness to me thy poor servant, now cast upon this bed of languishing, and griev'd with sickness. Sanctify, I beseech thee this thy fatherly correction to me, and grant that

I may receive it, with all the patience and submission of a dutiful child. I defire to acknowledge and adore thy divine wisdom and goodness, in every dispensation of providence towards me; and only beg, that thou wouldest keep me safe under all, and then use what methods thou pleasest, of bringing me to thy self. Manifest thy strength in my weakness. Make even my feeble condition an instrument of thy glory; and, the more my outward man decayeth, strengthen me, I befeech thee, so much the more continually, with thy grace and holy spirit in the inner man. Let the sense of my weakness add strength to my faith, and seriousness to my repentance. That if it be thy good pleasure to restore me to my former health, I may lead the residue of my life in thy fear, and to thy glory; or else grant me so to take thy visitation, that, after this painful life ended, I may dwell with thee in life everlasting. For this, O Lord, is the chief, the most earnest desire of my soul, that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord, or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord; so that living and dying I may be thine, through Fefus Christ, my dear and only Saviour. Amen.

M E D. V. Upon Recovery from Sickness.

I. IF dangers and distresses awaken our consideration, surely the deliverance from them ought to excite our thanksgiving. The judgments of God extort complaints from us; and shall his mercies be received in silence? When he afflicts and wounds, we seek him early; and shall we forget him, when

he refreshes and heals us? That fure were most unworthy, most reproachful. The rather so, because we are able to give our felves a very plain and rational account, how it comes to pass that we receive evil at the hand of God; but the good he vouchfafes us, furnishes just matter no less of wonder. than of thankfulness. Death is the punishment of fin; the diseases and decays of our bodies are so many degrees of, and advances toward that death: And our consciences can find no difficulty in justifying these painful dispensations. For none of us can defcend into his own breast, without discovering infinite personal offences, which might provoke God to take this forfeited life, and to cut us off in the midst of our days. But, when he forbears to do fo, when he checks his wrath, and fuspends the execution of that fatal sentence gone out against us; we can difcern no reason for this in our selves, but must refolve it all into the fole, the undeferved, goodness of our compassionate and long-suffering Lord.

And fuch, my foul, is now thy cafe. Thou wert hastening apace to the regions of death, and in fear that thou should'st be depriv'd of the residue of thy years. But when thou wast almost cut off with pining fickness, and thine eyes even failed with looking upward; when thou reckonedst each night and morning, that there would be an end of thee, upon earth; Isa. xxxviii. 12, 13, then did the Lord stand by thee and save thee, even because he had a favour unto thee. Psal. xviii. 19.

II. Now, tho' this be the condition common to all mankind, that we contribute no part, to the efficient or meritorious cause of such goodness; yet

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n the final cause we may and must bear a very confiderable part. We could not give the bleffing to our felves: We could not deferve that Almighty God should give it us: But it will be incumbent upon us to take care, that fuch grace be not bestowed in vain : fince strictly speaking, neither this, nor any other of the dispensations of providence, can possibly be in vain. For some effect they will of necessity have, even with regard to us. But if they answer not the good purposes, for which they were defign'd, better were it for us, that we had never received them at all. The lengthning out our days, if we do not amend our manners, is but the ministring fresh and larger opportunities of adding yet more, to our fins here, and to our torments hereafter. And happier had it been, to have been swept away with a fwift destruction, than to be deliver'd from our fears. and to live fuch a life afterwards as is certain to render us more miserable in the end. For every mercy, every escape, must be accounted for; and these which are entertained unthankfully, will at length prove curses, instead of bleffings, to us. It will therefore become thee, my foul, very feriously to confider, wherein true thankfulness consists, and what are the instances, by which it must be express'd.

III. When men do any fignal acts of kindness to cach other, the receiver, if he is able, thinks himfelf oblig'd to pay them back again, in some service or benefit as good. This is what men cannot be excused from, provided fit opportunities offer, and their circumstances enable them to do it. But when the power of doing this is wanting, we are sensible,

that so much as falls short in procuring a friend's real advantage, ought to be made up in all becoming testimonies of respect. In such a readiness of mind as plainly shews, that the party does not however want the will and hearty desire, of returning such

favours in kind, and to the full.

Now the fame rule of equity must needs hold toward our great benefactor in heaven. He is indeed fo great, that his all-fufficiency can neither need, nor receive, any addition. And we are fo very poor and impotent, that it were the extremity of vanity and madness, to imagine our selves capable of adding The utmost we can do is to demean our felves so, that he, and all the world, may plainly perceive us duly fensible of his bounty. Now this can be demonstrated only by our constant and zealous care, to please and honour him, by taking delight in the obedience he hath enjoyned us, and testifying, by our practife, that we esteem the service of so liberal a master, our most reasonable duty, and perfect freedom. Therefore our lips ought to fet forth the praises of the Lord, and his kindness should ever be in our mouths; yet are those praises never set forth effectually, yet is that kindness never acknowledged as it ought, except our lives and every action proclaim it. The professions of gratitude are of no confideration in any case, farther than they express the inward fentiments of the heart. That heart cannot be truly grateful, which does not labour, and study, by all proper means, to approve it felf to the person, whose debtor it is. And how this is to be done to Almighty God, his own word hath informed us; by declaring, that the man who truly bonours him will order his conversation aright, Pfal. 1. 23. that

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that they who love him will give testimony of their affection, by keeping bis commandments. John xiv. 15. that the goodness and forbearance of God (both in its natural and defigned tendency) leads to repentance, Rom, ii. iv. that it even constrains men to live no longer to themselves, but to him who bath done so great things for them, 2 Cor. v. 15.

IV. These are reflections so self-evident, so very obvious and natural to every man, that feldom are any remarkable calamities undergone, or deliverances obtained, without exciting them in our minds. Few wretches are so hardened in wickedness, few so abandoned, and loft to all fense of God and goodness. but in the feafons of fickness and danger, they see their past follies with displeasure, and are convinced of the reasonableness of forsaking them. But this is the general unhappiness, this the great fault of most men, that such remorfe quickly wears off, and their good intentions cool again. The fmart of the rod ceases, and the success of the correction is lost with it. The health of the body grows more confirmed, and the conscience hardens in proportion to the constitution. And thus the man returns to his old vanities and vices, with the fame unconcernedness as before.

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But, O my foul, let it not be thus with me. No. Let me look back with great feriousness, upon the vows I made, when I was in trouble; and confider, that these were not to be transient and occafional refolutions; that they were intended for lasting obligations, and cannot be fincerely discharged, unless they influence the remainder of that life, so graciously restored to me. I ought to look upon

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my felf as one raifed from the dead, and favoured with life a fecond time; that from henceforth I might employ and use the gift to the honour of the giver, who hath thus, as it were, created me afresh. He faw it better, upon my request, to continue me longer in this state of tryal; and I ought to give the more earnest heed thereunto; that every day added to my past years may prove a higher advancement in piety and virtue; that none of my holy purposes languish or die, as too many have formerly done; that this late approach to the grave may perpetually warn me of my mortality; and that, whenever death and judgment shall actually overtake me, (as overtake me they most certainly will) I may not be found less provided to meet my Lord, than this last fummons left me.

For, can I reflect upon my late weakness, and entertain an imagination fo vain, as that this body, in its greatest vigor, may promise it self an everlasting continuance? Can I observe this youth of mine renewed as the eagle's, and attribute it to any other cause, than the almighty power and infinite goodness of him, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive, after the council of his own will? Can I acknowledge my prefent recovery owing entirely to that power and goodness, and not discover the indispensible engagements, which lie upon me, to make fome fuitable returns? And what return is possible, what so proper, so acceptable, as that of a thankful heart; a diligent improvement of this mercy; life, in every part of it, entirely dedicated to him, who hath strengthned his title now yet more, and made it upon fo many accounts his own?

V. I will therefore be frequently reacting those folemn exercises of repentance, performed in the bitterness of my foul; and by the repetition shew, that the good thoughts I entertained, continue to be the calm and fettled determination of my more composed mind. I will strictly examine, what fault is committed, what duties neglected, or but flightly performed, what abuses, or what failures in a right improvement of health heretofore, might probably have provoked God, to cast me upon the bed of fickness, and reduce me to such extremity of suffering. I will thank the Lord for giving me warning by this affliction; but especially for touching and foftning my heart, and inspiring me with godly forrow, and holy purposes. And to my own endeavours I will add my most fervent prayers, that the continuance of his grace may, out of this painful chastisement, produce the peaceable and blessed fruits of righteousness and faithful perseverance. To this end I will not fail, frequently to renew my good refolutions; to cherish and keep up in my soul all heavenly dispositions, by constant private prayer and ferious reflection; by attending duly upon the publick worship; by reading, and hearing; and confcientiously applying God's holy word to my present circumstances and necessities; by letting slip none of the precious opportunities for strengthning my faith and other christian virtues, in the facrament of my dear redeemer's body and blood. I will take heed to all my ways, be upon my guard against all temptations and occasions of sinning, moderate in my most lawful pleasures and enjoyments, and diligent in all the duties, which the feveral relations wherein I fland

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stand, and the state of life to which I am appointed by providence, require of me. I will set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, that I offend not in my tongue. Pfal. cxli, 2. xxxix, 1. I will take heed, that I hurt not any man, by thought, word, or deed; but will extend my charity, as I am able, to all mankind. To the poor diftreffed members of my bleffed Saviour, by fuch fuccours, as their condition stands in need of, and mine qualifies me to give: To others, by my good advice, and feafonable instruction; to all, by my prayers and good wishes, and the powerful motive of a pious example: And even to my enemies, by meekness and forgiveness, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath had compassion on me. I will make it my business to become every day more in love with religion; and to induce all with whom I converse to be so: that I may, in some measure give a check to the abominations of this degenerate age in which I live, and adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, or at least fave my self from this untoward generation. In a word, I will be fure that the fense of God's mercies (of this last in particular) may never depart out of my mind; but live, and grow, and bring forth fruit, which may influence me powerfully to discharge my duty, to the very last hour of my life.

VI. Nor think, my foul, that any refolutions can be too strict, any endeavour too much, upon this occasion. For, after all that is come upon me for my evil deeds, and for my great trespass, seeing that my God hath punished me less than my iniquities deserve, and hath given me such a deliverance as this; Ezra ix.

And

ix. 12. Should I again break his commandments. would be not then be angry with me till be had confumed me, so that there should be no escaping? Verf. 14. O Lord, my God, thou art righteous, for I remain yet escaped; Vers. 15. but let not, I beseech thee, this mercy, by being forgotten or abused, turn to my utter and eternal condemnation. For, that this must be the sad consequence of such ingratitude at last, not only thy word hath told me, but I can plainly gather it from my own reason and experience. I feel what indignation the unkindness of persons, whom I have particularly obliged, kindles in my breast; I find, that no fort of resentment is more uneafy, no provocation harder to be born, than that which arises from the injuries and affronts of those unworthy people, who presume upon my friendship to use me ill. And can I suppose, that the just and jealous God will not call them to a fevere account, who turn his grace into wantonness. and, when they live by miracles of bounty and long-fuffering, live fo, as to dishonour him, and reproach the patience that spared them? The more remarkable and particular his goodness hath been. the heavier and more insupportable, no doubt,' will be that wrath, which hardened and impenitent wretches treasure up to themselves, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. ii. 5. So that our bleffed Lord's admonition to the impotent man, is in effect the voice of reason, and every man's own conscience. Each affliction, each escape calling out loudly to the receiver, Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. John v. 14.

And how indeed can it be expected, that infinitely worse should not come, when neither severity will drive, nor compassion and kindness lead to amendment, when neither correcting, or sparing, can do any good? The conditions of those men are dangerous, whose distemper only is strong: But theirs must needs be desperate and mortal, whose very remedies feed and inslame their disease. If pruning and manuring be both in vain, the next sentence upon the barren sig-tree is, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Luke xiii. The axe is already laid to the root, and if it be listed up to give the fatal stroke, the end of every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, we are expresly told shall be, to be burnt with unquenchable Fire.

J

These things, and divers others which will be apt upon fuch occasions to offer themselves, if apply'd well and warmly to my conscience, wil! have a very great and happy force, in forming my dispofition, and regulating my conduct, for the time to come. The recollection of God's abundant mercies will inflame my breast with holy gratitude and fervent love; fuch as would keep me ever paffionately desirous, to pay the just tribute of my best service in return, and chearfully to walk in the way of his commandments. The remembrance of his judgments will possess me with an awful fear of displeasing him, and convince me, by my own experience, that no flesh can stand before him, when he is angry, Pfal lxxvi. My late languishings and feeble condition, will be a feafonable and lively admonition, what this frail mortal nature is; these will teach me te die daily to the world, as a Person, who hath here no con-

continuing city, but ought to feek one to come. Heb. xii. A person, who must not, from even the most confirmed health, entertain any fuch fond prospects and vain confidences of long life, as may tempt me to presume death and judgment to be at a great distance, and myself secured against any surprize from them: Much rather ought I to expect them every moment; and, both from the daily Spectacles of mortality in my neighbours, and the fenfible decays, or fudden changes which happen to my felf, quicken my preparation to meet that lord, who hath compared bimfelf to athief in the night, and foretold us, that he will come in such an hour as we think not. Matth. xxiv. 43, 44. Thus shall I, by a true christian prudence, draw spiritual advantage out of temporal evils; discern the goodness and wisdom of providence, even in the most afflicting dispensations; convert the pains and difeases of a vile perishing body, into instruments of strength and health to my immortal foul; and have a happy occasion of acknowledging with David, that it is good for me to have been in trouble, fince by that I have learnt, more diligently to practife, and more stedfastly to persevere in, the statutes of my God, Pfal. cxix. 71.

HYMN.

PRaise the Lord Omy soul: and all that is within me praise his holy mame. Psal. ciii. 1.

Praise the Lord, O my soul: and forget not all his

benefits. 2.

Who can express the noble acts of the Lord; or shew forth all his praise? Psal. cvi. 2.

Which forgiveth all thy fins: and healeth all thine infirmities. Psal. ciii. 3.

Fff

Which

Which saveth thy life from destruction: and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness. 4.

Which satisfieth thy mouth with good things; ma-

king thee young and lusty as an Eagle? 5.

For his arrows stuck fast in me : and his hand pref-

sed me sore. xxxviii. 2.

There was no health in my flesh, because of his displeasure: neither was there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin. 3.

My foul abborred all manner of meat : and I was

even hard at death's door: Pfal. cvii. 18.

Then cried I unto thee, O Lord: and got me to my

Lord right bumbly : Pfal. xxx. 3.

I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of mine age: as for thy years they endure throughout all generations. Psal. cii. 24.

But what profit is there in my blood: when I go

down to the Pit? Pfal. xxx. 9.

Hear my prayer then, O Lord, and with thine ears consider my calling: hold not thy peace at my tears. Pfal. xxxix. 13.

O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength:

before I go bence and be no more seen. 15.

So when I cried unto the Lord in my trouble: he deliver'd me out of my distress. Psal. cvii. 19.

He fent his word, and healed me: and I was faved

from destruction. 20.

Ot what great troubles and adversities hast thou shewed me, and yet didst turn and quicken me: Yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again. Psal. lxxi. 18.

Therefore will I praise thee and thy faithfulness, O God, Vers. 20. I will offer unto my God thanks giving, and pay my vows unto the most highest. Plat. 1. 14.

For

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b

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot declare thy truth. If. xxxviii. 18.

But the living, the living he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make

known the goodness of the Lord, 19.

And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee: for thou, O Lord hast never failed them that seek thee. Psal. ix. 29.

As for me, I will give great thanks unto the Lord with my mouth: and praise him among the multitude.

Pfal. lxvi. 14.

O come hither and hearken all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what he hath done for my foul. Pfal. lxxviii. 15..

I was in misery, and like unto him that is at the point to die: but he delivered me out of all my fear.

Pfal. xxxiv. 4.

If the Lord had not helped me: it had not failed, but my foul had been put to silence. Psal. xciv. 17.

But when I faid, my foot hath Slipped: thy mercy,

O Lord, held me up. 18.

Thou hast turned my beaviness into joy: thou bast put of my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness. Psal.

The Lord is my strength and my shield, my beart bath trusted, in him, and I am delivered: there fore my heart danced for joy, and in my song will I praise bim. Psal. xxviii. 8.

O how plentiful is thy goodness, which then hast laid up for them that love thee: and that thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in thee, even before the sons of men! Psal. xxxi. 21.

O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing Fff 2 that

that is evil: the Lord preserveth the souls of the faithful, he delivereth them from the hand of the wicked one. xcvii. 10.

His mercy and truth shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

for ever. Pfal. xxiii. 6.

I will keep the ways of the Lord: and will not for sake my God as the wicked doth. Pfal. xviii. 21.

For I have an eye unto all his laws: and will not

cast out his commandments from me. Ver. 22.

Praised be the Lord, who hath not cast out my prayer: nor turned his mercy from me. Pfal. lxvi. 18.

Yea, bleffed be the Lord God, even the God of Ifrael: which only doth wondrous things. Pf. lxxii. 18.

And bleffed be the name of his majesty for ever: and let all the earth be filled with his majesty, Amen, Amen. Ver. 19.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to

· the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever shall be: World without end. Amen.

After this Hymn, the Reader may enlarge his Meditations to the fame purpose by repeating the xxx, lxxi, lxxvii, cxvii, cxviii Pfalms.

PRAYER.

Most mighty God and merciful father, wonderful in thy doings, and gracious in all thy difpensations toward the children of men; I thy unworthy fervant proftrate my felf before thee, with all the fervent affections of a grateful heart, acknowledging it thy goodness, that I am not long ago confumed. Thou, Lord, hast chastned and corrected me, but

but thou hast not given me over unto death. Blessed therefore be that divine wisdom, which saw this late affliction seasonable, and would not suffer me to perish in my folly, for want of such necessary warning. Bleffed be that tender compaffion, which in the midst of wrath remembred mercy, which made all my bed in my fickness, which passed by my impatience, and many infirmities; and inclined a willing ear, to the wandring and discomposed supplications, of a poor feeble wretch, when he cried unto thee in his extreme anguish and distress. Blessed be the powerful influences of that grace, which disposed my heart to confideration and repentance. But above all, bleffed for ever be that power and goodness which, by sparing me, when I had deserved to be utterly cut off, hath given me opportunity to make good those holy resolutions, which thy grace inspired, when I was in trouble. Lord, let this goodness of thine, and my own serious purposes of amendment, never slip out of my mind; but preserve in me a constant tender fense of the indispensable obligations I lie under to better obedience. Make me every day more and more zealous in promoting thy glory, and the good of my brethren: As a person saved from destruction, for this very end, that the remainder of my life should be employed in the fervice of my gracious deliverer. In this fense, O my God, I humbly offer and present unto thee this foul and body, rescued from hell and the grave; befeeching thee to keep them thine for ever. O let not the return of my health produce a relapse into my former fins; but become an instrument of thy greater honour, of my own stricter and more stedfast virtue here, and my more exquisite happiness hereafter. O! that the talents of time and ability

ability to do good, which have been heretofore fo wretchedly neglected, may (now they are afresh committed to my trust) be, for the time to come, fo faithfully improved, that the fhining graces of an exemplary conversation may hold some proportion with the bleffings, I have been so particularly favoured withal. Let these excite, not me only but others also, by my example, to love thee more fervently, to serve thee more chearfully, to trust in thee more affuredly. In thee O Lord, who shewest us thy goodness so plenteously, and daily pourest thy benefits upon us : Pfal. Ixviii, 19. ix. 10. In thee who never failest nor forsakest them that seek thee : lxvii. 4, In thee whose mercies are sweet, whose loving kindness is better than life it self, whose service is perfect freedom and in keeping of whose commandments there is exceeding great reward xix. 11.

To this end, fanctify, I befeech thee, all the methods of thy providence to the falvation of my immortal foul; and especially, let not thy abused mercies ever rise up in judgment against me. O! may my past sufferings work in me great humility and godly fear; that from them I may confirm my felf in faith and patience, and an entire refignation to thy will, and wifer appointments for me. Bring back frequently to my remembrance the promises and supplications, poured out in the bitterness of my foul; that those successful addresses to the throne of grace, may stir me up effectually, to the paying what I then fo solemnly vowed. Open thou my lips, O Lord that my mouth may declare thy mercy and truth as long as I live, and praise my God, while I have any being. Psal. civ. 33. And, forasmuch as this recovery is only the lengthening out a little that span of life, which

which must shortly have an end; suffer me not, I pray thee, to forget, that I am a stranger upon earth; but help me so to disengage my heart from these things here below, which my own late experience hath taught me) cannot profit in the day of wrath; that my hopes and affections may be unalterably fixed upon those better and eternal treasures which thou bast prepared for them that love thee. Let the thoughts and certain expectations of death and judgment be fo constantly, so powerfully present to my soul that in what hour soever my lord shall come, I may be found realy to meet him, and to go with him to the Marriage. Even so, blessed Jesus, grant me in such manner to pass through things temporal, that I finally lose not the things eternal; but that I may use and improve thy grace here, till grace at last be swallowed up in glory, and I translated to my master's joy. All which I beg for thy own merits fake, my only mediator and redeemer: To whom, with the father and holy spirit, be ascribed, as is most due, from me, and every creature, all honour and glory, dominion and power, thanksgiving and praise, and humble adoration, henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

MED. VI. Of death

I T is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment. Heb. ix. 27. So fays the spirit of god himself; and what is thus appointed, none can reverse, none can escape. That then, which remains for us, who lie under this sentence, to do, is only to endeavour, that we may die, as becomes men and christians: 2 Cor. v. 10. That is, as persons, who

who expect to render an account of the things done in this body, and receive a recompence accordingly, whether it be good or bad. But who may abide that day? Or who shall stand, when the lord appeareth? Who indeed; when not only the thing it felf, but the very apprehensions, and especially the approaches, of it are so dreadful? For what is more terrible to mortal man, than dying; and what more so to sinful man, than being judged? But yet, my soul, since these must unavoidably come, let us see what course can be taken, to soften a little, and reconcile us to them: Nay, let us try, if it be not possible, not only to bear them contentedly, but even to meet

them gladly.

II. If death be considered in it self, it is no more, than what all the living creation here below undergoes, in common with our felves. And what is dying? It is a ceasing to live, after the manner we now do. It is a removal, or rather, an escape, from a world of misfortunes and miferies; of forrow and disquiet; of malice and deceit; noise and contention; of pains and anguish; of crosses and disappointments; of vanity and vexation; and, which is worst of all, of temptation and fin. It is doing that once for all, which we have done in part, a thousand times already; by fickness and faintings, by the decays and Infirmities of nature; and by the loss of tenderest relations, who tore away our very heart with them. In short the present life, even to the prosperous, will be found upon a just computation, to have made a very unequal distribution. For even snch have a larger proportion of trouble, than of happiness. But to the generality of mankind, it is a rough tempestuous fea; and death is the making their port, or at least

least retiring into the shelter of a creek, where storms can reach and annoy them no more. These are not affected strains of philosophy, but weighed and measured truths; such as every man is, or may be, fadly convinced of, at his own expence. The only deceit arises from our natural fondness for living; which God hath wifely infused, and woven into our fouls, that we might be the better enabled to fustain our present calamities. As, on the other hand, he hath made faith of a future state our virtue, and ordained the miseries of the present life, as an exercise for that virtue; that both together might be a balance at least against the objects of sense; draw off our affections from a place, which was never intended for our rest; and raise our desires up to those better things, provided for us in another world. And furely, if this consideration were well weigh'd, however timorous nature may flart and give way at first, yet it would be no hard matter to come close up to death; and, by the help of familiar practice, and prudent pious meditation, to render not only the thoughts of it, but even the thing it felf, very tolerable to us.

III. But, if we consider death in another capacity, as leading, and keeping, us close prisoners, to a just and terrible judgment; thus it is attended with a sting indeed, which is the sense of guilt, and sin unpardoned. This is what nothing can relieve, but the comforts arising from true repentance, from a Saviour sacrific'd to expiate, and make full satisfaction for our offences; from a title to our part in that expiation, and savour of a reconciled God. And these, I hope, are comforts which belong to me.

G g g

For do but hear and observe (my foul) what reviving words the holy spirit hath spoken to this purpose. If any man fin, we have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our fins. I John I, 2. Christ hath dy'd, who is he that condemneth? Yea, Christ is risen again, and feated at the right hand of God, a perpetual intercessor, and a mighty Saviour to all them that come to God by him. Rom. viii. He hath told thee, that what the infirmity of the law and the flesh could not do, Christ hath done for us; Heb. ii. & iv. that he knows and hath felt our weaknesses, and will not fail to make large and very gracious allowances for them; that Jesus hath washed us in his own blood, and though our fins be as scarlet, yet, upon our true repentance, they shall be white as snow. Rev. i. 5. Isa. i. 18. Look up then, and see thy Lord coming in the clouds: Thou must be judged, 'tis true, but thy redeemer shall be thy judge. And to whose decision would'st thou chuse to stand, but to thy best friend's? To him, who loved thee so dearly, as to die for thee, to be made fin and a curse for thee, that thou mightest be made the righteousness of God in him? This is thy fure confidence; and heaven and earth may pass away, but his merits and promises can never fail. And he hath promised, that all who repent and believe, and ferve and love him, shall be faved in that day, and be where he is, to behold his glory. John xvii. Nay, not to behold only, but to enjoy it; to live, and reign, with the fon of God himself. For such he hath made sons also, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, referved for them in the heavens. Rom. vill.

viii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 4. 1 John iii. 2. And if I know that I love God, I know, that I shall be with him, and be like him, and see him as he is.

IV. O glorious day, which will bring me to the full and inseperable enjoyment of my dearest Saviour and most merciful God, when this veil of sless shall be done away, and spiritual joy, and peace, and knowledge, and love, shall forever abound! Blessed be thy name O God, who hast opened an entrance into such bliss for poor returning sinners! Blessed be thy bounty, who hast ordained such an infinite recompence, for our impersect and unworthy labours! And, if thou hast decreed withal that I must pass thro the regions of darkness and death, to come at those seats of light and glory; shall I grudge this Passage? When I have born the heat and burthen of the day, shall I mourn, because the evening is come, and shrink back, when I am called to receive my wages?

Some difficulties I know there are: But thou, O Lord, will strengthen my faith, and not suffer me to faint, under the terrors and conflicts of my last tryals. Give me grace, I beseech thee, to consider, that this is the method, by which thy own Son was made perfect; that it is no more, nay, it is much less, than he suffered voluntarily, and for my sake; that, by suffering death he hath overcome it, and rendered the conslict more easy to them that come after. Grant me to rejoice, at least to support my self, with the nearer prospect of an eternal rest and

reward.

V. And do thou, O my foul, labour continually to strengthen thy own frailties and fears, with holy G g g 2 medi-

meditations, with the repeated exercises of faith, and repentance, of trust, and love, and heavenly-mindedness. Bid adieu to this vain world, and shake hands with it chearfully. As for all that is uneafy here, thank God for a deliverance from it; and for all, whom thou haft reason to love and be concerned for, remember that, thou leavest them under the conduct of the fame good providence, of which thy felf hast had so large experience. Consider that God is all relations, and more than all, to those that want them; and, if they continue to feek and ferve him diligently, he will never forfake them, but be their God, and their guide, unto death. Bid all my friends weep, not for me, but for themselves, who are still in a state of danger and temptation, of vanity and mifery, from which they that die in the Lord are for ever released. Tell them, that we shall see one another again shortly. And as I am going now to those dear and good fouls, who have got the start of me in this journey; fo they, and I, and all God's children, shall have a glorious, a joyful meeting, at the résurrection of the just. We shall all go together into a place, whence tears and mourning are for ever banish'd; where the vision of God, the service of the lamb, the company of angels and faints shall minister eternal matter of praise and joy; and our happiness will exceed all we can conceive, all we can hope for. And now, O death! where is thy fling? O grave! where is thy victory? I Cor. xv. 55. Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore (my foul) be thou ftedfaft, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forafmuch as I am affured that my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. EIA=

EJACULATIONS.

While I am at home in the body, I am absent from the Lord; for I walk by faith, not by fight; therefore I am consident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8.

Lord, whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.

Pfal. lxxiii. 25.

My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is still my strength, and my life, and my portion for ever. ver. 26.

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an

borrible dread bath overwhelmed me.

For the enemy of souls crieth out aloud, and the ungodly one cometh on fast; he is minded to do me some mischief, so maliciously is he set against me. But I am thine, O save me; I am bought with a price, O fesus, even with thy most precious blood. I am one of thy sheep, rebuke this ravening wolf, for thou urt greater than he; and none is able to pluck me out of thy hand. Psal. lv.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world have mercy upon me. Thou that takest away the sins of the world receive my prayer; Thou that sittest at the right hand of God, have mercy upon me. Communion Ser-

vice.

Thou, Lord, art full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering and of great goodness; O deal not with me after my sins, nor reward me according to my iniquities. Psal. ciii. 8. 10.

Thou knowest whereof we be made, and remembrest that we are but dust. Look graciously therefore upon

upon my weakness; pity the interruptions and imperfections of my prayers; pardon what I cannot now do with a steady and composed zeal, and accept the

fincerity of my beart. Ver. 14.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of my soul, shut not thy merciful ears to my prayers, but spare me, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy judge eternal, suffer me not at my last hour for any pains of death to fall

from thee. Burial Service.

Faithful is he that bath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee: Heb. xiii. Lord, grant me the knowledge and sensible experience of this most gracious promise. Stand by me, and save me from the reproof of him that would eat me up. Psal. lvii. Deliver my soul from the roaring lyon, who goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Pet. iv.

Lord, I commit my foul unto thee, as into the bands of a faithful creator, and most merciful redeemer. 1 Pet. v. 8. Spare it, O God, and let it be thine in the day when thou makest up thy jewels, Mal. iii. In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver me. Litany.

PRAYER.

Almighty Lord, father of all mercies, and God of all comfort, I flee unto thee for fuccour in this my great extremity; most humbly befeeching thee, to support and strengthen me in the last conslict of my life. Deliver me from the snares and terrors of the wicked one, sustain my agonies with the peaceful comforts of a quiet and good confcience,

science, and of perfect reconciliation with thee, my God. Lord, as thou bringest me nearer to thy self. fo let my love, and my defires of thee be stronger, And O that it may please thee in thy abundant mercv, to afford me some sweet foretaste of future bliss. that I may triumph even in death it felf: But if in this I know not what I ask; yet at least fuffer not my faith to be shaken, nor thy loving-kindness to fail: and, however thou dealest with this corruptible body, let my foul, I implore thee, be precious in thy fight. Wash it in the blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that, all its pollutions being purged and done away, it may be presented pure and unblemished before thee, and be received into thy everlafting kingdom, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy only Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Short EJACULATIONS for the last Extremeties.

Believe, bleffed Jesus, that thou shalt come to be my judge; I therefore pray thee help thy servant, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Te Deum.

O make me now to be numbered with thy faints in

glory everlasting.

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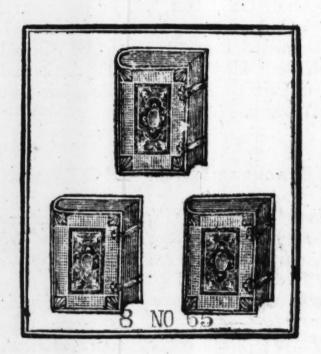
e,

The snares of death compass me round about, and its pains get hold upon me; haste thee, O God, to deliver me, make haste, O Lord, to help me. Psal. cxvi. lxx.

Thy Kingdom come, O God, Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

These last may be used by the Friends and Standers-by, with necessary alteration of the Person, after the sick Party is a abled from the Use of them.



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